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# HISTORY *of* WAR



**BUILDING A LEGEND**

# SPITFIRE



**Uncover the engineering triumphs that rebuilt Britain's 1940 'saviour' into its fastest, deadliest fighter**



## **SHOT DOWN OVER IRAQ**

John Nichol on his fateful 1991 flight and horrific POW ordeal



## **20 JULY PLOT**


What if the Wehrmacht successfully overthrew the Nazi regime?



## **BONEY'S 'BRIDGE TOO FAR'**

How Austrian guile crushed Napoleon's columns





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## CONTRIBUTORS



### JOHN NICHOL

John is a best-selling author, historian and retired RAF Tornado navigator. Over on page 48 he discusses his experience being shot down over Iraq, enduring captivity as a prisoner of war, and his reflections on the war over three decades later.



### ROGER MOORHOUSE

Roger is an historian and author specialising in modern German history, Central Europe and the Second World War. On page 62 he discusses what might have transpired if the 20 July plot had succeeded in killing Hitler.



### MIGUEL MIRANDA

This month *History of War* regular Miguel leapt at the chance to write about a hugely significant conflict in his nation's history: the Philippine-American War. He recounts the heroic Filipino fight for freedom against the might of the US military (p12).

*Above: A Supermarine Spitfire Mk XIV, SL721, restored after the war by private collectors*

# Welcome

The Spitfire is beyond doubt one of the most iconic aircraft in British, if not world, history. However, as Stuart Hadaway explores this issue, its legendary status cannot be chalked up solely to its role in the critical summer of 1940. In fact, the aircraft's important but merely adequate performance against the Luftwaffe during the Battle of Britain was just the beginning of its journey to becoming arguably the world's greatest fighter plane. From North Africa to the Pacific and the liberation of Western Europe, the Spitfire underwent years of re-engineering and rearming, constantly being adapted to suit nearly any task or conditions thrown at it – even taking to the waves on the Royal Navy's carriers in the form of the Seafire.

To paraphrase the maxim: legends aren't born, they're rebuilt.

**Tim Williamson**  
Editor-in-Chief

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**24** How the RAF engineered its fastest fighter to become an unrivalled war-winner



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# **WAR**<sup>in</sup> **FOCUS**

## **COMPASSION IN GORLICE**

**13 June 1915**

During the Gorlice-Tarnów offensive on the Eastern Front, a German infantryman pauses to give a wounded Russian soldier a drink from his flask. The Germans initially planned the offensive as a minor operation launched on 2 May, aimed at relieving pressure on the Austro-Hungarian forces to the south. However, it soon developed into a substantial assault on Russian forces. On 13 June, the Central Powers attacked east from Magierów towards Lemberg (now Lviv) to sever Russian communication lines between their northwest and southwest fronts. Under heavy artillery fire assisted by aerial reconnaissance, the Russians suffered a high rate of casualties and by 21 June had retreated from all their positions.





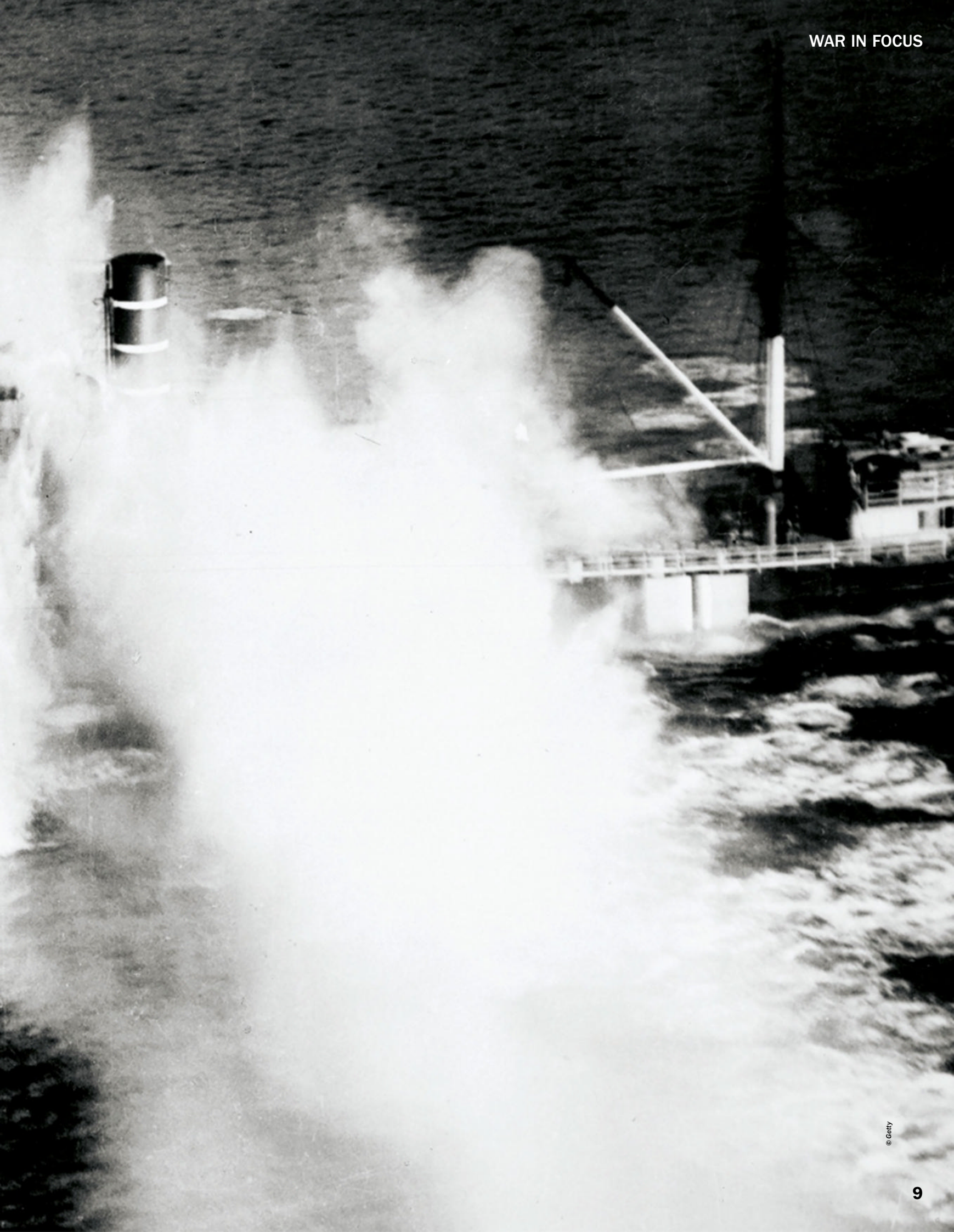
## **WAR<sub>in</sub> FOCUS**

### **BEAUFIGHTERS' ROCKET ATTACK**

**19 September 1944**

Rockets fired by Bristol Beaufighters of RAF Banff Strike Wing hit the 1,367-ton merchant vessel Lynx in Stav Fjord, Norway, sinking it. The Strike Wing was formed of No 144 Squadron RAF and No 404 Squadron RCAF. They used tactics developed by RAF North Coates Strike Wing, whereby Beaufighter Mk VIC aircraft would attack vessels using cannons and rockets to suppress anti-aircraft fire. These strikes would then be followed by torpedo attacks from Beaufighters adapted to carry British 18in (450mm) or American 22.5in (472mm) torpedoes.









## **WAR**<sup>in</sup> **FOCUS** **HOMECOMING**

**19 June 1982**

Royal Navy sailor Peter Bayliss hugs his partner onboard HMS Glasgow on his return to Portsmouth Harbour after serving in the Falklands War. Glasgow was one of the first ships to arrive at the islands alongside HMS Sheffield and HMS Coventry. It came under heavy aerial attack on 12 May, with a bomb from an Argentine A-4 Skyhawk striking the Glasgow 3ft (0.9m) above the waterline. Luckily, it did not explode and the ship eventually limped back to Portsmouth for repairs.







## TIMELINE OF THE

## PHILIPPINE-AMERICAN WAR

After three centuries of Spanish colonial rule, Filipinos finally gain their freedom – but are soon locked in a struggle against US imperialism that costs over 200,000 lives



## BATTLE OF MANILA BAY 01

Early in the Spanish-American War, the US concludes it must defeat a Spanish squadron in Manila Bay. With a force that massively outguns the Spanish, it engages and sinks six vessels while suffering just ten casualties, weakening the Spanish grasp on the Philippines.

1 May 1898

19 May 1898

August 1898 – February 1899

4-5 February 1899

## A REVOLUTIONARY'S RETURN 02

Following the US victory at the Battle of Manila Bay, Spanish colonial control of the Philippines weakens. The Filipino revolutionary leader Emilio Aguinaldo is transported back from exile in Hong Kong aboard the USS McCulloch.



Emilio Aguinaldo seated right, with other Filipino independence politicians

## TREATY OF PARIS

Armistice negotiations begin in August 1898 and the Spanish cede Cuba and the Philippines. Although Filipino revolutionaries supported US forces to overthrow the Spanish, the US decides to colonise the Philippines. Arrangements are made in the Treaty of Paris, which the US Senate passes in February 1899.

## BATTLE OF MANILA 03

The Filipino insurgency against US occupation begins with the largest battle of the war. The Filipinos struggle during the first day and push for a truce, but the American commander, Elwell Stephen Otis, refuses and escalates fighting into a second day. The Filipinos are defeated, but minor skirmishes continue on the outskirts of Manila for several days.

Filipinos attack a compound housing a unit of 13th Minnesota Volunteers during unsuccessful counter-attacks

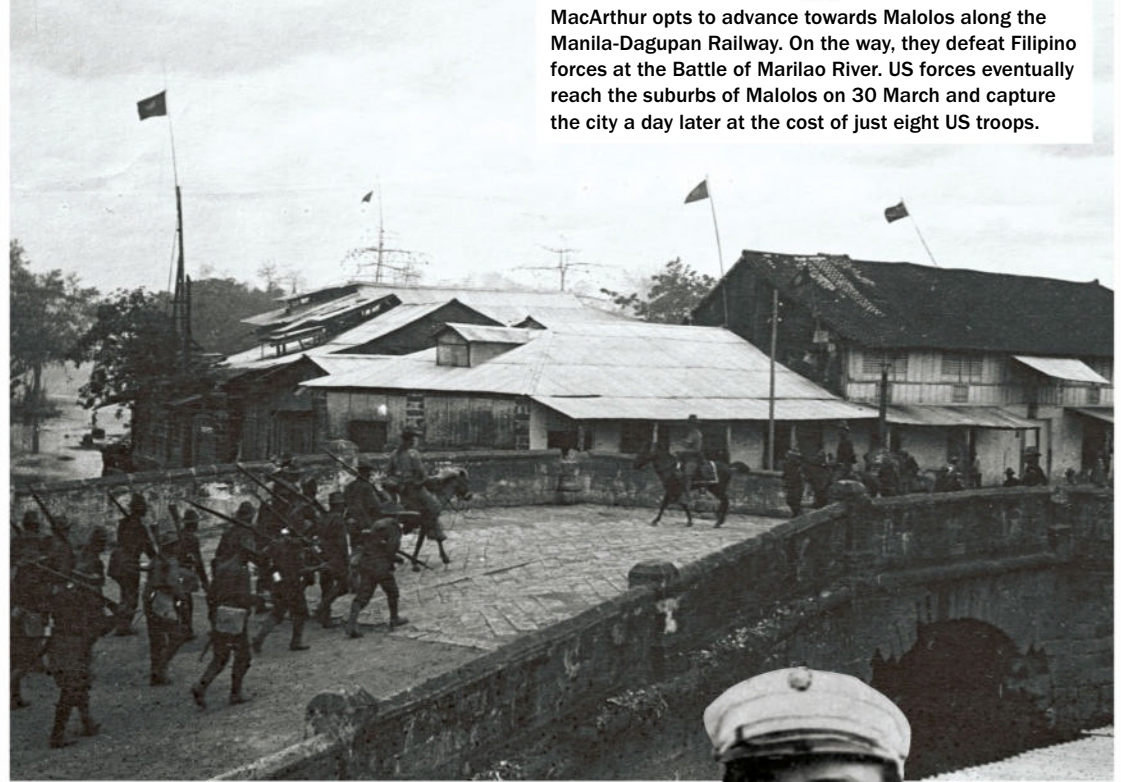






Well-armed US ships cause carnage at Manila Bay

MacArthur's victorious men enter Malolos



## MALOLOS FALLS 05

MacArthur opts to advance towards Malolos along the Manila-Dagupan Railway. On the way, they defeat Filipino forces at the Battle of Marilao River. US forces eventually reach the suburbs of Malolos on 30 March and capture the city a day later at the cost of just eight US troops.

## ASSASSINATION OF ANTONIO LUNA 06

While travelling to Aguinaldo's headquarters, general Antonio Luna encounters an old enemy, Captain Pedro Janolino. Heated words are exchanged, and Janolino hits Luna in the head with his bolo knife. Janolino's men then open fire, killing Luna. As one of Aguinaldo's fiercest generals and best sharpshooters, the killing of Luna is a significant setback to the Filipino war effort, and exposes division in the revolution.



Antonio Luna oversaw guerrilla operations

10 February 1899

25-31 March 1899

5 June 1899

13 November 1899

## BATTLE OF CALOOCAN 04

Following a three-hour bombardment, American troops, led by Arthur MacArthur Jr, storm Caloocan. Success at Caloocan brings substantial sections of the Manila-Dagupan Railroad under US control. However, most Filipino troops retreat and regroup, launching an unsuccessful counter-attack 12 days later



Arthur MacArthur Jr, later the governor-general of the Philippines, observes the battle



Members of the Oregon Volunteer Infantry engage a Filipino attack

## GUERRILLA WARFARE FORMALLY ADOPTED 07

Continued defeats in conventional engagements cause Aguinaldo to decree that guerrilla war, previously considered his option of final recourse, should now be the insurgency's foremost strategy. A succession of bloody ambushes against US forces follows.



The spirit of Lawton depicted challenging attempts to tear down U.S. flags in the Philippines (1900)

The spirit of Lawton depicted  
challenging attempts to tear down  
US flags in the Philippines (1900)

20 December 1900



**MacArthur with  
son Douglas**

Responding to the new guerrilla threat, MacArthur, now military governor of the Philippines, places the whole country under martial law. US troops take action against anyone suspected of supporting the insurgency. Filipino leaders who advocate for Philippine independence are arrested and deported to Guam.



## MOROS REBELLION INFLAMED 12

Filipinos make peace with the US, but the Moros Muslim population continues to resist occupation. Across three incidents in March, three US servicemen are killed in ambushes near Parang. Major General Adna Chaffee attempts to open negotiations, but fails to appreciate that the Moros are not homogenous and he cannot secure a settlement. The Battle of Pandapatan follows and the conflict continues until 1913.

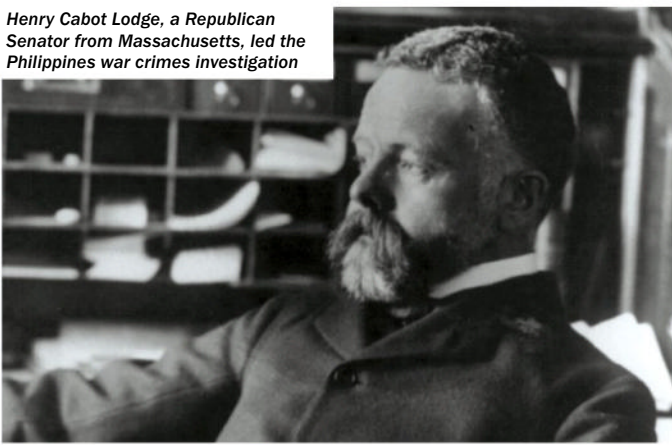
*A detachment of the Philippines Constabulary, indigenous troops used by the US occupiers against the Moros Rebellion*



## INVESTIGATION INTO TORTURE

The Lodge Committee begins an investigation into allegations of war crimes in the Philippines. The first witness to testify, future President William Howard Taft, admits that "the torturing of natives by so-called water-cure and other methods" had been used "on some occasions to extract information".

*Henry Cabot Lodge, a Republican Senator from Massachusetts, led the Philippines war crimes investigation*



## GENERAL MIGUEL MALVAR SURRENDERS 11

In early 1902, the last remnants of Filipino resistance fade away. Guerrilla General Miguel Malvar attempts to establish a pseudo-republic in Batangas province. However, he later surrenders to Bell after continued desertion by his officers and his concern for the suffering of Filipino civilians.

*Like many Filipino revolutionaries, Malvar died before Filipino independence came. He is pictured lying in state after passing away in 1911*



23 March 1901

September 1901

31 January 1902

16 April 1902

2 July 1902

March 1902

## CAPTURE OF AGUINALDO 09

Aguinaldo is detained after US troops disguise themselves as Filipino soldiers and pretend to be transporting US prisoners of war. On 1 April, he signs an oath accepting that the US officially controls the Philippines and issues a formal surrender. However, sporadic hostilities continue for the next 12 years.

*Aguinaldo's capture, illustrated for the front page of Le Petit Journal*



## SCORCHED EARTH BEGINS 10

After the destruction of a 74-man US military garrison, J Franklin Bell is made commander of US forces in Batangas and Laguna. He begins counter-insurgency efforts later referred to as 'scorched earth tactics'. Bell orders the relocation of civilians to internment camps, the destruction of crops and the slaughter of livestock.

*J Franklin Bell ordered brutal reprisals against Filipinos after heavy US casualties*



## THE CONFLICT OFFICIALLY ENDS

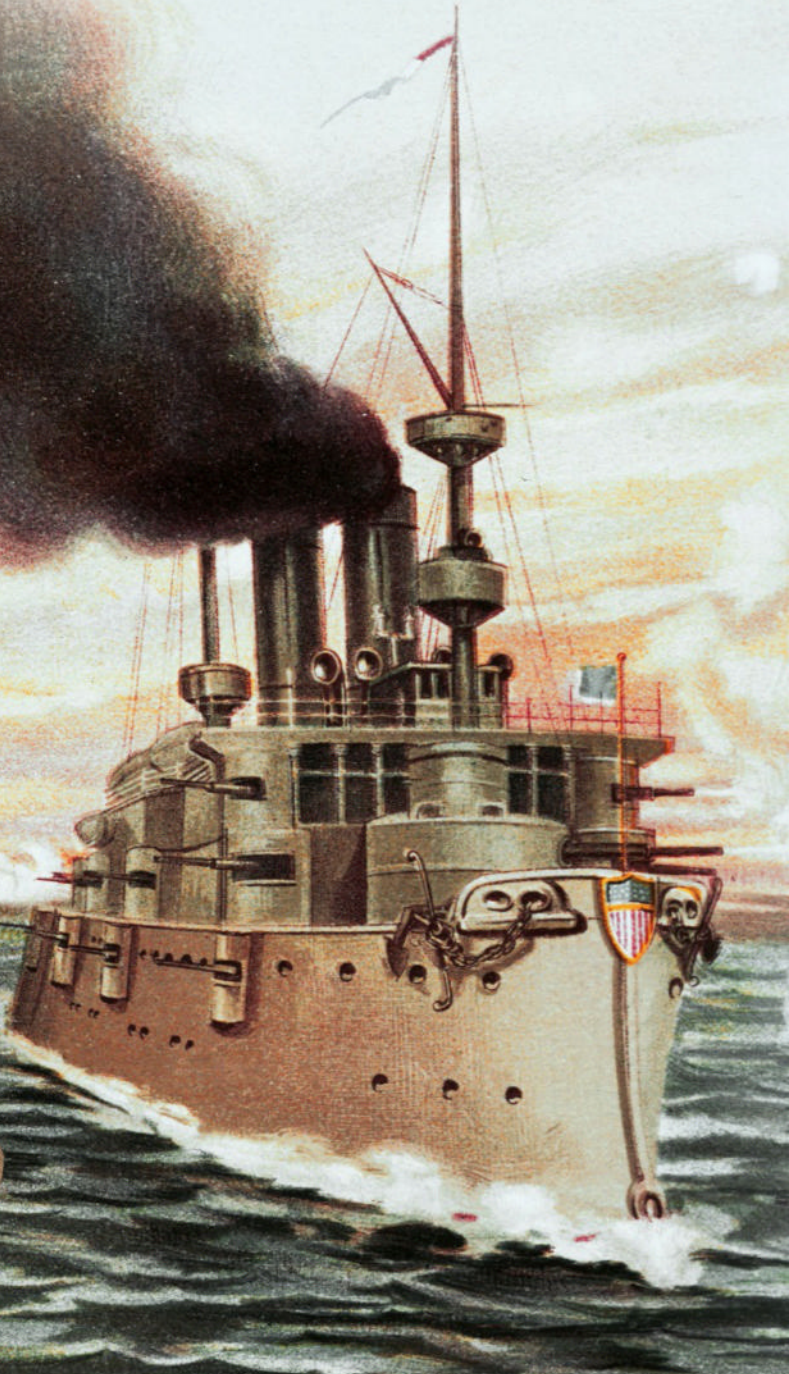
The war officially comes to its conclusion when the US Congress passes the Philippine Organic Act. It includes a Bill of Rights for Filipinos, elements of self-government and amnesty for Filipinos who had participated in the fighting. However, full independence is not given to Filipinos until 1946.



Frontline

# THE BATTLE OF MANILA BAY

A single naval engagement ushered in a new era in Asian geopolitics.  
At the centre of it all were a handful of battleships and a daring plan



With just six warships  
Commodore George Dewey  
wiped out Spain's navy in Asia



**I**t was on the cusp of a new century when US naval power reached previously unimaginable heights. Influential strategists like Alfred Thayer Mahan, together with the careful plans drawn up by the Naval War College and the Office of Naval Intelligence, created a new surface fleet of coal-driven battleships. Unlike the old European powers, the United States had coastlines facing the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Farther away, the subdued kingdom of Hawaii awaited, and the need for additional coaling stations and ports to reach Asia was an urgent one.

The resulting Asiatic Squadron had just seven battleships and their support vessels. The ageing Civil War veteran and talented bureaucrat, Commodore George Dewey, was tasked with leading it. It was a challenging role since the squadron faced the rival Asian fleets of the Royal Navy and the Imperial German Navy. The rise of Japan, fresh from its victory over China in 1895, alerted US naval strategists that another competitor was on the prowl.

The Spanish-American War (1898) broke out after an explosion sank the USS Maine in Havana harbour on 15 February, with an outraged US public and surging patriotism leading to war being declared on 24 April. Meanwhile, in Hong Kong orders from Washington sent Dewey on a course of action that has never been equalled by any American naval commander since. The plan was in all likelihood crafted by Secretary of the Navy John D Long and his assistant, the hawkish Theodore Roosevelt, and it committed the Asiatic Squadron to deliver a crushing blow against the Spanish in the Philippines.

After leaving Hong Kong on 27 April, what unfolded on the evening of 30 April and the

## **“WHAT UNFOLDED ON THE EVENING OF 30 APRIL AND THE FOLLOWING DAY WAS A DARING SPECTACLE THAT WAS SOON BURIED IN SENSATIONAL PUBLICITY AND HEROIC SPIN”**

following day was a daring spectacle that was soon buried in sensational publicity and heroic spin. The professional and superbly led Spanish fleet had 11 battleships – obsolete designs with wooden hulls and smaller guns – waiting for the Americans. Meanwhile the Asiatic Squadron, less one battleship, reached Manila after sailing past at least three layers of defences. The Luzon coast at the time had a chain of lighthouses watching the South China Sea. This first layer was ineffective and Dewey's flagship the USS Olympia and its five companions the Baltimore, Raleigh, Boston, Concord and Petrel approached Manila Bay under cover of darkness. A quick reconnaissance of Subig (Subic) Bay revealed no Spanish ships waiting in ambush. Two layers were now compromised. The third and final layer of defence, the outpost on Corregidor Island guarding Manila Bay, fired on the American column but was silenced by the roar of 8in (203mm) guns.

With 11 of the Spanish battleships arrayed near the Cavite shore and with further coastal batteries in Manila to the east, the American ships engaged them upon Dewey's command. This moment was later immortalised as a curt instruction to the USS Olympia's Captain

Gridley that he may fire when ready. The Spanish fleet, led by Admiral Patricio Montojo, mounted a pathetic defence. In one baffling instance, two sea mines exploded near Olympia to little effect. The two navies blasted each other from daybreak to 11am, with the American ships suffering minor damage and no fatalities. The Spanish flagship Reyna Cristina and two others were sunk, with the rest crippled and taking on water. Manila was spared complete destruction by Dewey's threat of a full-scale bombardment if its batteries continued firing upon the squadron.

With the telegraph cables to Hong Kong severed, news of the outcome could only be relayed by boat. Tense weeks followed. The Spanish-American War's glorious opening chapter had unforeseen consequences – an early problem was to deter approaching German and Japanese warships without triggering a standoff. Equally, Dewey did not have the troops available to defeat the Spanish on land. These regiments were mustered in San Francisco and had been dispatched aboard cattle ships in late May, and by the time US forces led by Wesley Merritt were camped outside Manila a new conflict was brewing.

The Battle of Manila Bay is seen by many as the single event that made the Spanish-American War and the subsequent Philippine-American War (1899-1902) a catastrophe for the Filipino people. But it was Dewey's last hurrah after a lifetime in uniform. Lionised by the American press and feted by politicians, the newly promoted admiral spent the 1900s on the General Board of the Navy working on the expansion of American sea power. As a memorial to his victory, the beachfront outside Manila was named Dewey Boulevard – until it was changed by Philippine law in 1963.

**Left:** The American press feasted on US triumph the Battle of Manila Bay, stoking public support and anticipation of victory in the Spanish-American War

**Right:** The arrival of the US Army's volunteer regiments outside Manila in May 1898 had unintended consequences that triggered a full-scale war by the next year





# AGUINALDO: PATRIOT & RENEGADE

Young and destined to lead his country's struggle for independence, this former ally of the US Navy turned into a bitter foe

**F**or decades, rebellion in the Philippines was kept in check by the Spanish colonial government through the watchful gaze of the Catholic Church. It's ironic, then, how the town of Kawit, located on a spit of land near a naval fort, became the centre of a full-blown revolution. In 1896, the youthful Emilio Aguinaldo and his father-in-law, both sworn members of the Katipunan (a masonic group plotting to overthrow the government)

and known to be in good standing with the authorities, trounced the Guardia Civil and rallied the townsfolk. The Tagalog people of Cavite province rallied and armed themselves for a long struggle against the Spanish – just days prior a similar plot hatched in Manila had been bungled by the conspirators.

The revolution of 1896 was a slog and, much to the rebels' dismay, the Spanish reinforcements were seasoned in putting down uprisings, having crushed rebellions



**“MUCH TO THE REBELS’  
DISMAY, THE SPANISH  
REINFORCEMENTS WERE  
SEASONED IN PUTTING  
DOWN UPRISINGS, HAVING  
CRUSHED REBELLIONS IN  
CUBA AND MOROCCO”**

*Above: A revolutionary leader by his mid-20s, Aguinaldo began planning a Filipino government in 1897 and tried to establish a republic in 1898*

*Left: The revolution and the war against America was a magnet for daring young men such as Gregorio Del Pilar*



As the fighting dragged on past 1899 the US Army's treatment of Filipinos worsened, sparking a public outcry in America



in Cuba and Morocco. Later that year, with Aguinaldo and his remaining troops trapped in the caves of Biak-na-Bato, a deal was struck with the Spanish governor general for a ceasefire. Aguinaldo agreed on self-imposed exile in Hong Kong for a sum of money, yet even in the face of defeat he cast himself as a titular president of a non-existent republic. By the time he reached Hong Kong with his relatives in tow he had just turned 27.

The following year, with the Spanish-American War in full swing and Commodore George Dewey's unexpected triumph in Manila, a restless Aguinaldo was nominally allied with the US Navy and promised a supply of arms and funds. Still revered by the Tagalogs of southern Luzon, the USS McCulloch returned Aguinaldo to Cavite and he resumed his generalship to continue the war against Spain.

It's a matter of debate who was responsible for defeating the Spanish in the Philippines: Aguinaldo's thousands of rebels or the sheer might displayed by the US Navy's Asiatic Squadron. But two events set the course for a new war that pitted the temporary allies against each other. Spain's defeat and the resulting Treaty of Paris in December 1898 ceded Cuba, Guam, the Philippines and Puerto Rico to the United States government for \$20 million. When President William McKinley announced his policy of 'benevolent assimilation' for the Filipinos in the same month as the ill-starred treaty, it rescinded Aguinaldo's earlier unwritten agreement with the US Navy for total Philippine independence with the provision of coaling rights for American warships.

With Filipino troops kept out of Manila unless they surrendered their weapons, the

arrival of more US Army regiments incensed the Filipino leadership that had declared independence in June 1898 and organised a government by January 1899. Battles erupted in February 1899, and in the full-scale war that followed the disorderly American volunteer regiments swept away the Filipino revolutionary army.

An outraged Aguinaldo railed against the American surprise attack in San Juan on 4 February, claiming his troops around Manila were on leave, but cautioned his generals to treat American prisoners of war with

**Below:** American soldiers in the Philippines found the tropical climate challenging but proved extremely effective against local forces



kindness. Undeterred, the American forces under General Elwell Otis fought a slow and deliberate campaign that overran the Filipino lines around Manila.

In April Aguinaldo fled Malolos and tried to organise a shadow government for a guerrilla war. Cut off from the chain of command, Filipino generals and other officers resisted for as long as their ammunition and food could last. In a cruel twist, by 1900 Aguinaldo and his family were reduced to fugitives much like the Indian chieftains Sitting Bull and Joseph of the Nez Perce. At first leaving his mother, then his wife and son as hostages of the Americans, an arduous trek over the Cordillera mountain range and into the Cagayan Valley in January 1901 saved Aguinaldo and his companions.

As he sought refuge in the seaside village of Palanan, an outlandish plot to apprehend him was hatched by US officers, and a troop of cavalrymen aided by the Macabebe scouts of Pampanga finally captured Aguinaldo. Disguised in the ragged clothes of Filipino soldiers and led by the Spanish turncoat Lt. Lazaro Segovia, the US soldiers were greeted by Aguinaldo outside his temporary headquarters. When they overpowered the guards, Aguinaldo drew a revolver to defend himself but was restrained by his companion Dr Santiago Barcelona. After his surrender on 23 March, an American ship returned Aguinaldo to Manila to stand trial – he pledged allegiance to the United States in exchange for amnesty rather than exile. After the war Aguinaldo returned to politics, with little success. Blessed with surprising fortitude he lived long enough to see the Philippines gain full independence on 4 July 1946. Aguinaldo passed away on 6 February 1964, at the age of 94.



*Filipino rank and file weren't issued footwear – only officers had the privilege of wearing boots*

# PEASANTS & VOLUNTEERS

The Philippine-American War pitted a modern Asian army against a rising world power, with cataclysmic results





*Fast becoming outdated by the 1890s, the hand-cranked Gatling gun saw extensive use across the Philippine archipelago*

**W**ith the full support of the US Navy and diplomatic staff, upon his triumphant return to the Philippines on 19 May 1898 General Emilio Aguinaldo wasted no time raising an army and a government. On 12 June he arranged a declaration of Philippine independence in his hometown Kawit just south of Manila. Uncertainty about a future alliance with the United States and suspicion over their stranglehold on Manila compelled a relocation of the government to Malolos, a quiet town some 25 miles (40km) to the north.

It helps to understand what the short-lived Malolos Republic, also known as the First Republic, achieved in its brief existence. Once a constitution was passed in January 1899, for the first time in more than 300 years the population of Luzon was nominally under local rather than colonial rule.

Its legitimacy was upheld by the men who flocked to join Aguinaldo under the banner of the new republic: the original Philippine flag sewn by women volunteers in Hong Kong – a radiant sun surrounded by three stars on a white triangle, with a red band above a blue one. The republic's administrators and politicians included affluent men, no doubt, yet the ambitious and enterprising – even the unlettered – were among their number and in Luzon the common Filipinos were steadfast in their support for the government. This was evident in the revolutionary army as well.

Against it stood the shambolic US Army and its structure from late 1898 until the outbreak of war in February the following year. At first they pitched tents outside Manila and along the shores and mangroves east of the city harbour. Then they spread farther and farther, much to the consternation of the Filipinos. Thousands more African-American soldiers were sent to the Philippines in 1900 and 1901.

The American stomach couldn't be nourished with local cuisine, and meat and hardtack had to be shipped in from several countries. They also brought tinned meat, an early sign of

## **“SOME 200,000 AMERICAN SOLDIERS WOULD BE ROTATED IN THE PHILIPPINES FOR THE DURATION OF THE WAR AND THOUSANDS MORE WERE DEPLOYED AFTER ITS OFFICIAL END IN JULY 1902”**

the coming era of American colonisation. The volunteer soldiers were collected during the rush to fight in Cuba and their backgrounds encompassed the working class and first-generation immigrants from Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah and Wyoming. Each state furnished a whole regiment augmented by the army's professional formations such as artillery and engineers. The former was an unknown terror in the first year of the war, with the clumsy Gatling machine guns proving lethal against the Filipino infantry.

By January 1899 the number of American troops in the Philippines reached 14,000, and by the summer it was more than 25,000. The arrival of fresh reinforcements in the ensuing months ballooned their number to 70,000 by 1901. In the end, some 200,000 American soldiers would be rotated in the Philippines for the duration of the war and thousands more were deployed after its official end in July 1902.

The details of the rival armies are fascinating. The Filipinos were attired in matching rayadillo uniforms and drilled like Spaniards, and it was common for their officers to carry swords. The Filipino soldiers carried the same Mauser rifles as their previous colonial enemies although a few hundred American-made Remingtons and Krag-Jorgensens were included in their arsenal. There were artillery and cavalry as well, greater

in number than those fielded by the Americans, and Filipino engineering produced gunpowder and barrels for primitive cannon. Absent a rifle, the basic weapon of a soldier was the bolo – the long knife the Americans learned to fear. At least until 1899 each Filipino battalion had a single company equipped with bolos.

But the problems facing the Filipino army and its government ran deep. With General Elwell Otis in full command of the American Expeditionary Forces from February until April 1899 the battles in Luzon were gruelling ordeals for two large American divisions. The first division under Major General Henry Lawton struck north and secured the railroad connecting to the farmlands of Bulacan and Pampanga. The second division under Major General Arthur MacArthur struck east and secured Manila's water supply. These offensives weakened the republican army and its supply of weapons and ammunition. On 5 June 1899, the highest ranking field commander of the Filipino army, General Antonio Luna, was murdered with bolos and gunfire while inspecting veteran troops from Kawit. The Americans used the tragedy to claim Luna was a victim of a power struggle in the republican government.

The First Republic was vanquished before the year was out and in November the remnants of Aguinaldo's government shifted to localised rebellion. But American losses, as minimal as they appeared, were sometimes unexpected. During one action to mop up Filipino guerrillas near the shores of the Laguna lake, Major General Lawton was killed by a sharpshooter while giving orders to his men. His demise on 19 December 1899 represented the highest-ranking American casualty in the entire war.

On the Filipino side, an enduring defeat was later immortalised in nationalist history with the sacrifice of Gregorio H Del Pilar. A general at the age of just 24, his efforts to slow US columns in a mountain pass, where Aguinaldo and his staff had escaped, led to his death when the enemy routed his position.



# AFTERMATH AND ATROCITIES

The flawed yet formidable US forces in the Philippines used brutal tactics as efforts for a peaceful coexistence foundered

**W**hen hostilities broke out on 4 February 1899, the US Army still enjoyed public support at home and glowing news coverage in the American press. This was no longer the case by 1901 as the war dragged on. Even after multiple victories against the determined Filipinos, the purpose of the whole campaign came into question. While it was true the Filipino republic's army was beaten within five months and was largely non-existent by the summer of 1899, resistance continued and as it spread American troops resorted to harsher tactics against the population.

At this point the Philippines was under the temporary governance of General Arthur MacArthur. (His son Douglas MacArthur led efforts to defend then later retake the Philippines in the Second World War.) From 1900 until 1902 the American martial law

regime organised a harsh counter-insurgency in Luzon and the Visayas while trying to build a firm alliance with the Muslim communities in Mindanao, the vast southern island whose valleys were prized as agricultural land. The irony here was the pacification of Luzon and the Visayas, for all their terror and violence, proved a success but fighting continued in Mindanao until the next decade.

After General Aguinaldo's surrender in 1902 the Philippines remained under military rule, albeit with American civilians like Governor William H Taft running an ad hoc civil service, and the threat of local uprisings persisted. As part of its carrot-and-stick approach the US allowed officers in the vanquished republican army to hand over their arms and sign an oath swearing off any further resistance. In extreme cases, however, a local police force or constabulary whose membership consisted of Macabebes from Pampanga and Filipinos who

switched sides were sent to wipe out the last pockets of guerrillas.

These unsung patriots were the most devoted revolutionaries from the 1896-98 era. Foremost among them was General Miguel Malvar, another young man who was consumed by the independence struggle, and unlike some of his peers a capable officer who was fearless in battle. His reputation in Batangas province and the countryside of southern Luzon was so formidable that he attempted to declare a pseudo-republic in the territory outside Manila. This posed no real challenge to the Americans, yet Malvar's stubbornness and skill at concealment meant he was only brought to heel in April 1902, just a few months before President Theodore Roosevelt declared the war over – a political decision from the White House to mute growing criticism of American atrocities. Like other Filipino veterans, Malvar was granted





*The ruthless John 'Black Jack' Pershing was one of the most decorated American officers to serve in the Philippines*



amnesty and returned to civilian life. He passed away in 1911.

The lowest ebb for American troops in the Philippines came at Samar, a windswept island in the Visayas region covered in dense woodland, where local guerrillas took revenge on billeted American soldiers that triggered a 'scorched earth' response. Just as in southern Luzon another general from Aguinaldo's regime, Vicente Lukban, organised a successful resistance that was aided not just by local support but the island's impenetrable forests.

When the angry residents of Balangiga, a small village near the southern tip of Samar, killed 54 American soldiers on 28 September 1901, the retaliation was overwhelming. The destruction of property, and mass executions of suspected guerrillas, tainted American public opinion. The campaign surrounding Balangiga remained a sore spot for American and Philippine ties. It wasn't until 2018 that the US government returned Balangiga's church bells, originally stolen as trophies, as a gesture of friendship and goodwill.

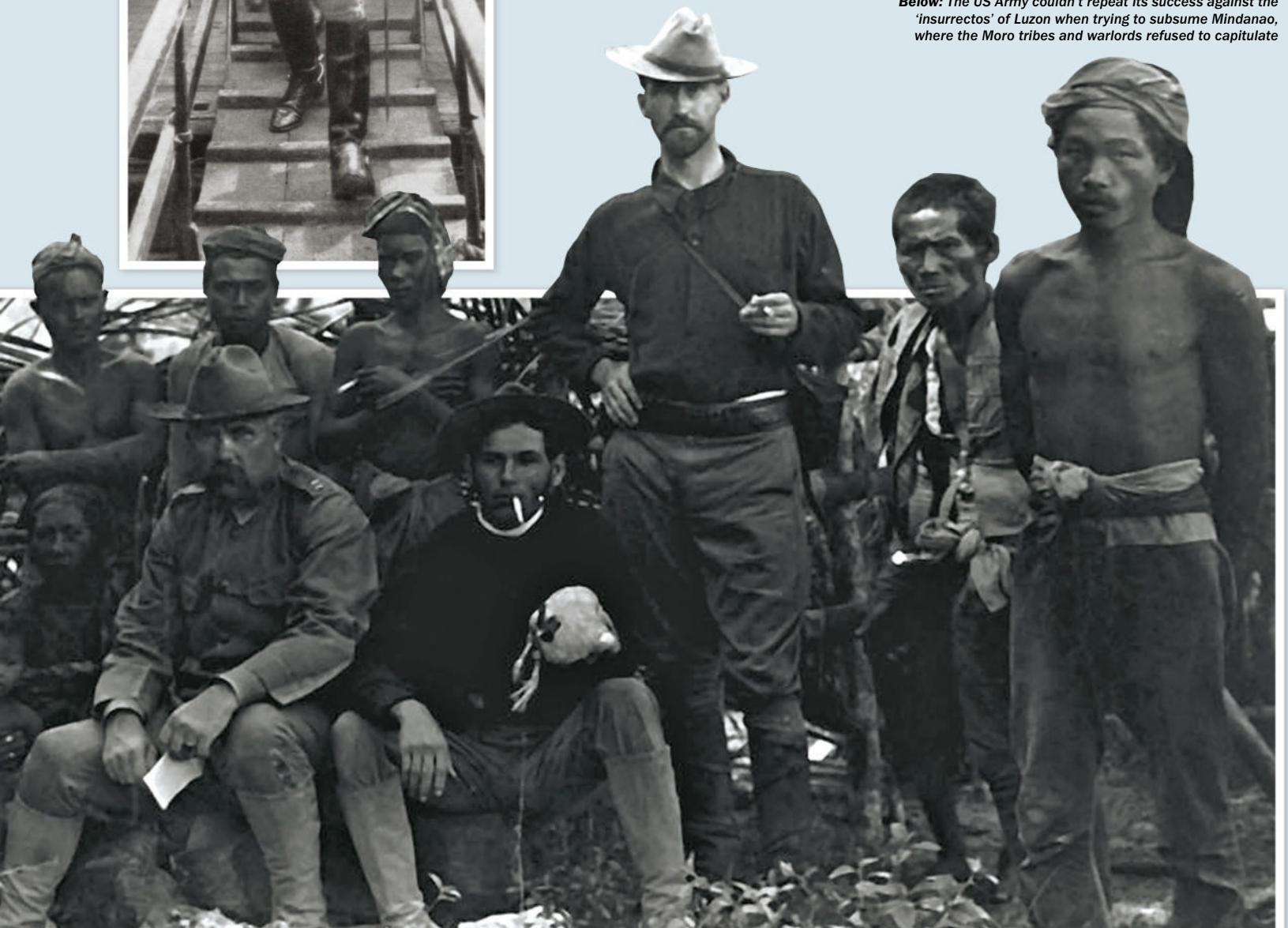
In 1902 the worst was yet to come. What makes the war to many a dark and unpopular conflict in the historical record is the US

troops' unnecessary acts of violence against communities, when these contributed little to the greater efforts at 'benevolent assimilation' – a vague policy of shaping local customs to accept American rule.

The endless skirmishes with Muslim raiders and the bloodshed in places such as Sulu, a tropical island, and the Lake Lanao region, were an unsettling contrast to the public schools and other social programmes designed in Manila for weaning Filipinos off their nationalist ideals.

Long after the US Army steamrolled the First Republic and its last vestiges, from 1903 onward American forces were enmeshed in wiping out entire Muslim tribes who saw no benefit in embracing a new Western overlord after resisting the Spanish for generations. As with the earlier conflict in 1899 that was portrayed as a 'Philippine insurrection', a decade of fighting in Mindanao was dubbed a 'Moro rebellion'. In one cruel incident in March 1906 an entire village from the island of Sulu escaped to a dormant volcano called Bud Dajo. In the ensuing battle around 1,000 people, the local fighters and their families, were gunned down by vengeful Americans led by Major General Leonard Wood.

*Below: The US Army couldn't repeat its success against the 'insurrectos' of Luzon when trying to subsume Mindanao, where the Moro tribes and warlords refused to capitulate*





# SPITFIRE

## BEYOND THE MYTH OF BRITAIN'S ICON

The Supermarine Spitfire is renowned as the saviour of Britain in 1940, but that was just the start of this remarkable fighter's story

WORDS STUART HADAWAY



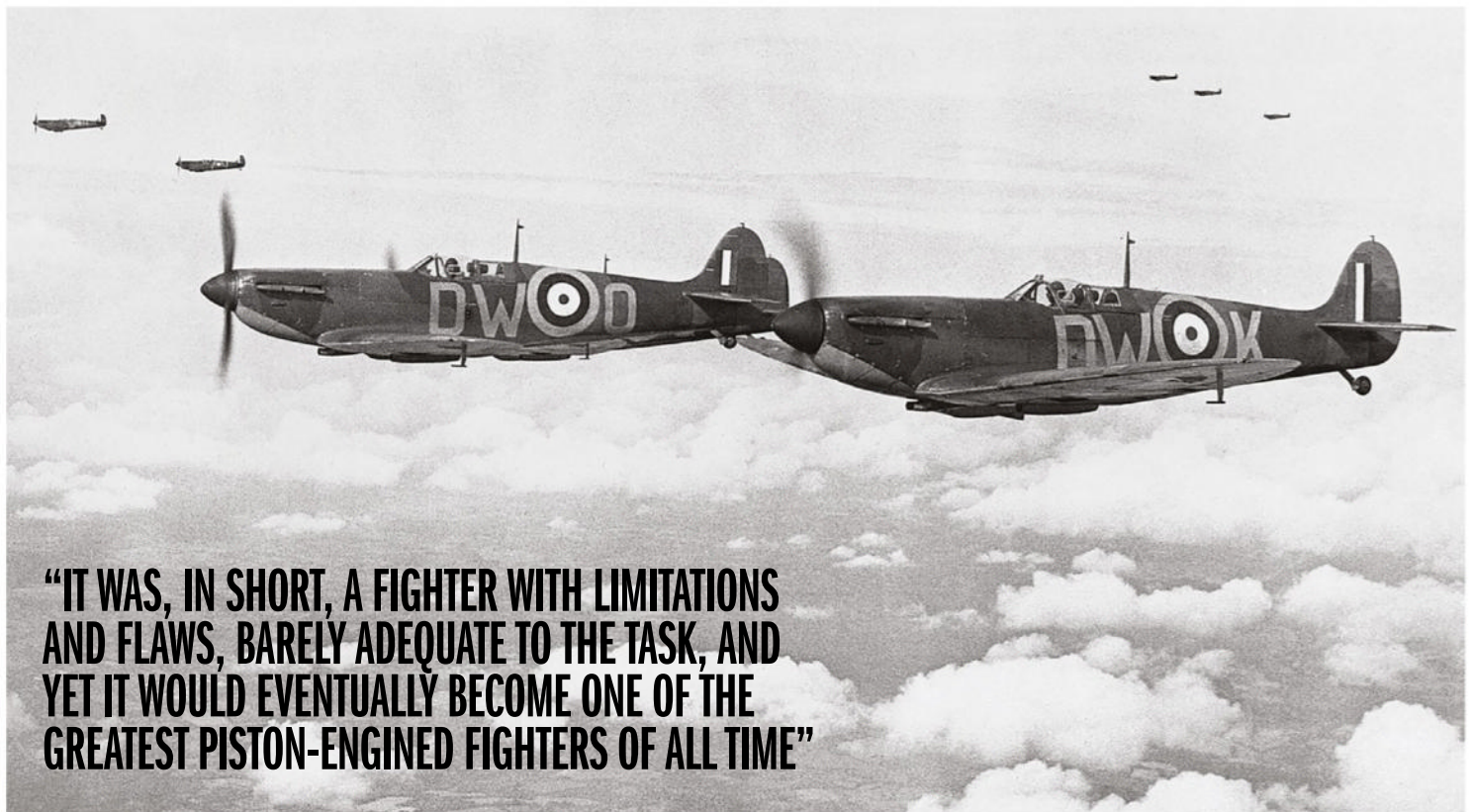
**Stuart Hadaway**

Stuart is a professional aviation historian, working for the Royal Air Force's Air Historical Branch, and is also the author of several books on the RAF.

**T**he Supermarine Spitfire Mk 1 entered service with the Royal Air Force (RAF) in 1938. It was the RAF's most modern fighter: sleek, fast, heavily armed and beautiful. Two years later, with the Hawker Hurricane, it formed the frontline of Britain's defence against the German Luftwaffe, and while it proved arguably the most successful of the British or German fighters involved, it was only by a narrow margin. The Spitfire Mk 1 was short-ranged, its engine cut out for vital seconds at the start of a dive, its radios were limited in range and channels (a crucial factor in Britain's advanced air defence system) and its eight .303in (7.7mm) machine guns lacked punch. It was, in short, a fighter with limitations and flaws, barely adequate to the task, and yet it would eventually become one of the greatest piston-engined fighters of all time.

It is common, even usual, for aircraft to have not yet reached their full potential when they enter service. Even today, with all the computerised assistance available, aircraft like the Eurofighter Typhoon and Lockheed Martin F-35 rolled off the production line as a basic model, and further development and modifications are needed to bring them to their full potential, as time and experience build. The Supermarine Spitfire is perhaps the most outstanding example of this principle. Ten years after the introduction of the Mk 1 and following dozens of variants, the final main production version, the Mk 24, could fly nearly 100mph (160kp/h) faster, climb over 10,000ft (3,000m) higher, and pack a bigger punch. It had different wings, a different engine, a different fuselage, a different cockpit and scores of other modifications, and yet was still instantly recognisable as a Spitfire. The Battle of





**“IT WAS, IN SHORT, A FIGHTER WITH LIMITATIONS AND FLAWS, BARELY ADEQUATE TO THE TASK, AND YET IT WOULD EVENTUALLY BECOME ONE OF THE GREATEST PISTON-ENGINED FIGHTERS OF ALL TIME”**



**Above, top:** Spitfire Mk Is during the Battle of Britain. While their ‘finest hour’, the battle was just the start of the Spitfire’s journey

**Above:** A restored Mk.XVI in flight with the white stripes of the Normandy landings

Britain would be its ‘finest hour’, but in many ways the best was still to come.

The Supermarine Spitfire was designed by a team led by the brilliant Reginald Mitchell, incorporating the latest technology from across the aviation industry. The elliptical wing was designed by Canadian Beverley Shenstone, while the under-wing radiators had been pioneered by the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE). The monocoque structure, where the aluminium skin bore much of the structural load, had been developed by a range of German and British designers before being perfected in America. The 1,030hp Merlin II engine was provided by Rolls-Royce. Part of Mitchell’s genius was to bring all of these elements together, and much of the Spitfire’s greatness lay in the underlying strength of the basic design. Time would prove that all manner

of extra elements could be added, or removed, without compromising the essential structure.

The type first flew in 1936, and entered squadron service in 1938, a year after Mitchell’s early death. The modifications began almost immediately. Even before the Battle of Britain, 100-octane fuel was introduced, giving an increase in speed, and later selected Mk Is were fitted with different propellers to further enhance performance. Most changes came from combat experience over France and Britain. The cockpit was modified to give better visibility and allow quicker jettisoning, while other problems took longer to solve. Heavier cannon armament had been experimented with in 1938, and in the summer of 1940 the Mk Ib, equipped with two 0.8in (20mm) cannon and four 0.303in (7.7mm) machine guns, saw action with mixed results: the benefits of the heavier punch were evident, but the cannon



## SPITFIRE

were prone to jamming, and when the Mk II was introduced in August 1940 it came in two variants – with or without cannon. Thin armour was added to the fuel tanks, the electrical systems improved, and over the winter of 1940-41 a gadget known as 'Miss Shilling's Orifice' after its inventor, Beatrice Shilling, was added. Formally known as the RAE Restrictor, it solved the serious problem of the fuel-injection system cutting out under negative-G.

Even in the two years or so that the Mk I was the main type in service, the modifications to the Spitfire came so fast that it would be almost impossible, not to mention tedious, to chronicle them. Whatever improvements were needed, the airframe could adapt around it. Only the introduction of a new engine, the Merlin XII, warranted the designation of a new marque in the summer of 1940, with the Mk II entering service. This incredible pace of change would be maintained throughout the Spitfire's service.

The Mk III Spitfire was intended to have a more powerful engine and incorporate a range of other modifications, developed through 90,000 man hours of redesign and experimentation, but ended up being a non-starter in operational terms. The change of German tactics at the end of the Battle of Britain, with very high altitude operations proving out of the reach of either the Spitfire or the Hurricane, was a problem that needed a rapid solution, and the Mk III was taking too long. Although most of the developments that went into the Mk III were incorporated into later marques, the type itself was skipped. Over the winter of 1940-41 a large number of Mk I and Mk II airframes were fitted with Merlin 45 1,440hp engines, and the Spitfire Mk V was born.

What was intended as a temporary measure became the most numerous of any of the Spitfire marques. Existing orders were changed to Mk V standards, fresh orders added, and nearly 6,500 were built. The Merlin 45



**Above:** Canadian Spitfire Mk XVI in France, 1945

incorporated a single-speed single-stage supercharger and other modifications (including Miss Shilling's Orifice) to improve general performance, but especially at higher altitudes. The type came in three basic models to begin with, designated the Va, Vb or Vc, depending on the armament fit. Type A wings had the old eight 0.303in (7.7mm) Browning machine guns, and the Type B had two 0.8in (20mm) Hispano cannon plus four Brownings, while the Type C had fittings for either configuration. This production of multiple wings became standard from now on. All types could also carry a 500lb (227kg) bomb under the fuselage, or a 250lb (113kg) bomb mounted under each wing.

The Mk V immediately made its presence felt over northwest Europe, but it would also be the first Spitfire to go further afield and achieve what might be termed its second 'finest hour'. In June 1940, Italy entered the







**Above:** 601 Sqn Spitfire Mk Vs sweep over the Tunisian desert, 1943

war, immediately bringing the conflict to North Africa, with its colonies in Libya and Abyssinia, and into the Mediterranean. Britain's Royal Navy (RN) had dominated the sea for a century-and-a-half from its stronghold on Malta, and Italy immediately launched air attacks against the island and began to enforce a naval blockade. The fall of Malta would not only lead to loss of Allied control of the Mediterranean, but also sever the link to Egypt, and from there on to India and the Far East.

The Siege of Malta is the stuff of legend, with the initial air defence relying on a handful of Gloster Gladiator biplanes, soon supplemented by Hawker Hurricanes. The siege gradually tightened and conditions worsened, but were manageable. From March 1941 the Germans became involved when they deployed their Afrika Korps to Libya, and the Allied bombers, torpedo-bombers and naval vessels from Malta began to take an increasing toll on their lines of

supply. In December 1941 Fliegerkorps II was established in Sicily and began a relentless campaign against the island. The defenders were too few and outclassed, and the Spitfire Mk V was deployed to rectify the situation.

The first arrived in small numbers in March 1942 and took heavy casualties. The Luftwaffe was launching an average of two air raids a day, and the defenders were exhausted and outnumbered. An attempt was made on 21 April to send a reinforcement of 46 Spitfires, launching from the aircraft carriers HMS Eagle and USS Wasp, but the aircraft were caught on the ground after landing and within 48 hours only seven were still serviceable. On 9 May a second, larger formation of 60 aircraft was sent through the same method, this time being rapidly refuelled and relaunched before the Luftwaffe could react.

The RAF was now able to bring not only numbers but also superior performance to the defence of Malta. Its main adversaries were broadly the same as they had been in 1940, although the Messerschmitt Bf 109E was now replaced by the more capable Bf 109F. The much improved Spitfires could climb faster and higher to intercept the German aircraft, and the Luftwaffe's casualties mounted. By July, the RAF was intercepting raids far out to sea before they could even reach Malta, and in mid-August Spitfires began to sweep over Sicily, attacking airfields. The Mk V ensured British air superiority over the central Mediterranean, and in turn allowed the RAF and the RN to starve the Axis forces in North Africa of supplies.

The Mk V did not just defend Malta, it also proceeded further east to Egypt in August 1942. The British forces had been pushed back to only 50 miles (80km) west of Alexandria, and were perilously close to the strategically vital Suez Canal. While the Mk V would not have quite as dramatic an effect here as it would on Malta, it would show once again its versatility. In order to operate effectively in the desert a

**“THE MUCH IMPROVED SPITFIRES COULD CLIMB FASTER AND HIGHER TO INTERCEPT THE GERMAN AIRCRAFT, AND THE LUFTWAFFE’S CASUALTIES MOUNTED”**

**A Mk IX of No 64 Squadron undergoes an engine overhaul at RAF Fairlop, Essex, 1942**





# SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE DEVELOPMENT

The Spitfire's remarkable achievements were based on its incredible ability to be repeatedly developed and improved

**March 1940**

## LOOKING AHEAD

Even before the Spitfire has seen significant combat, the Mk III is taking to the skies testing a redesigned undercarriage, retractable tail wheel, clipped wings and (a little later) cannon.



**February 1941**

## STOPGAP SUCCESS

The Mk V is rushed into service as a stopgap measure to counter German high-altitude raids. It will become the most-produced Spitfire marque, with 6,479 built.



**May 1942**

## SPITFIRES AT SEA

The first Seafire Mk I (based on the Spitfire Mk V) lands on an aircraft carrier.

**August 1940**

## UPGRADED PUNCH

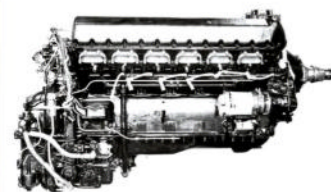
The Mk II enters combat with an improved engine for a faster climb and higher ceiling and, in the IIb, 0.8in (20mm) cannon.



**November 1941**

## THE FIRST GRIFFON

The Mk IV first flies with a Griffon engine. Based on a Mk III airframe, it becomes the prototype for the Mk XII, the first Griffon-engined Spitfire to see service.



**May 1942**

## ANOTHER STOPGAP

The Spitfire Mk IX is another stopgap measure, to counter the new FW 190, and goes on to be the second most-produced type, with 5,663 built.





**October 1942****SPITFIRE FLOATPLANE**

Resurrecting a 1940 idea, a Mk Vb and several Mk LFIXbs are converted as floatplanes for use in the Eastern Mediterranean. Three deploy to Egypt in 1943 but are not a success.

**April 1944****SUPERIOR GRIFFON**

Early Griffon Spitfires lacked performance at high altitudes, but the Mk XIV with a Griffon 61 solves that problem. It also proves excellent at intercepting V-1 rockets.

**August 1946****TWO-SEAT SPITFIRE**

A single Spitfire Mk VIII is converted to a two-seater to test its use as a training aircraft. The idea is not immediately implemented, but later around 30 Mk IXs are also converted.

**July 1943****QUILL'S FAVOURITE**

Jeffrey Quill, chief test pilot for the Spitfire, stated his favourite to be the Mk VIII. Entering service in July 1943, it plays a significant role in the Far East.

**April 1945****NEW WING DESIGN**

The increasing speed and stresses on the wing lead to a full redesign. The central sections are strengthened and the ailerons moved out, but the quintessential Spitfire shape is maintained.

**November 1950****SEAFIRES BOW OUT**

In November 1950, HMS Triumph returns home from Korea, where its Seafire Mk 47s had been the last of the Spitfire family to see combat, with No 800 Squadron.





filter was needed to keep sand out of the engine. A chunky Tropical Modification ('Trop Mod') filter was added under the nose, and while the increased weight and drag reduced the Mk V's top speed from 374mph (602kp/h) to 330mph (531kp/h) at 13,000ft (3,962m), the Spitfire was still a considerable step forward in the RAF's capabilities.

In October 1942 the Luftwaffe launched a renewed offensive against Malta, but suffered crippling losses. The same month, General Bernard Montgomery's 8th Army began the final advance during the Second Battle of El Alamein, and the next month Allied forces landed in Algeria and Morocco. Within months, the war in North Africa was over, in no small part due to the Spitfire Mk V.

The next major development of the Spitfire would also be a stop-gap measure that exceeded expectations. In the winter of 1941-42 a new German aircraft had entered the fray. The Focke-Wulf Fw 190 outclassed the Spitfire Mk V, and casualties began to rise. An effective counter, the Spitfire Mk VIII, was in development with a Merlin 61 two-speed two-stage supercharger. The type also had extended wing tips and tail fin for better control at higher altitudes, but it was months away from mass production.

Instead, Mk Vs and even Mk IIs were fitted with Merlin 61s, and their maximum speeds leapt to over 400mph (644kp/h). They were also given better air-intake systems, gyro gunsights, and 0.5in (12.7mm) guns instead of 0.303in (7.7mm) ones (in the new Type E wing). They entered service in May 1942 as the Spitfire Mk IX and proved a rare success among the otherwise dismal Dieppe Raid in August. The elegant design allowed easy modifications in the factories to 'clip' (shorten and square off) the wing tips to optimise low-level performance in the 'LF' version, or extend them and the tail into pointier ends to improve high-level performance in the 'HF'. Again, the engineering brilliance of the basic design provided extraordinary versatility.

The Mk VIII would eventually have its day, but a long way from Britain's shores. When the Japanese had begun their

## **"PHOTO-RECONNAISSANCE SPITFIRES, AND THEIR INCREDIBLY BRAVE PILOTS, WERE CRUCIAL IN GATHERING INTELLIGENCE ON ENEMY DEFENCES, INSTALLATIONS, AND PREPARATIONS DEEP BEHIND THEIR LINES, GIVING ALLIED PLANNERS THE EDGE"**

astonishing expansion across the Pacific and Southeast Asia at the end of 1941, the RAF had been able to put up very little effective resistance. Simple courage could not make up for inferior numbers and outdated equipment. The arrival of some modern fighters like the Hawker Hurricane helped to close the gap, but they were still out-performed by the Japanese Mitsubishi Zero and Nakajima Oscar and Tojo fighters. Small numbers of Spitfire Mk Vs were sent to protect Australia in early 1943, but it was not until October that year that they began to arrive in India.

The Japanese, sitting on the Indian border and poised to invade, were able to roam over the front lines and mount reconnaissance or bombing operations deep behind them with close to impunity, even bombing Kolkata (Calcutta). The Mk Vs were able to hamper their efforts, but it was only with the arrival of the Mk VIIIs in February 1944 that the Allies finally had an aircraft that could out-perform the Japanese fighters, especially being able to out-turn the nimble Zeroes and Oscars. Although consistently outnumbered, they were able to seize air superiority and then hold it through the reconquest of Burma, where the ability to move troops and supplies by air either onto or even deep behind the front lines would provide the Allies with a critical advantage. Post-war, the type would continue to serve in the Far East with the French in Indo-China. The Mk VIII would become the third most-produced Spitfire, and serve across the Far East during and after the war, but is now largely forgotten compared to the Mk V and IX.

While the fighter types are the most high-profile, one of the Spitfire's other most significant contributions involved avoiding any actual fighting. Photo-Reconnaissance (PR) types had been created from

*Below: A Spitfire takes off past a Beaufighter on Malta. While Spitfires defended their Maltese base, the maritime strike aircraft shredded Axis supply lines*







**Above, left:** A photo-reconnaissance Spitfire PR XI over France, 1944

**Above, right:** Ground crews prepare to load bombs on a Spitfire Mk VIII, Burma, 1945



early marques by simply removing the guns to save weight, installing cameras and adjusting the centre of gravity. Later marques were extensively re-engineered and purpose-built. The Mk VII fighter was optimised for very high altitude operations, and the PR VII had modified wings and a retractable tail wheel to reduce drag, while the PR VIII had larger fuel tanks. The PR XI could fly 2,000 miles (3,220km), alone and unarmed, protected only by its 422mph (479kph) speed at extreme altitudes, while the PR XIII retained four of its machine guns and was optimised for very low-level work with oblique cameras. Aircraft such as these, and their incredibly brave pilots, were crucial in gathering intelligence on enemy defences, installations and preparations deep behind their lines, giving Allied planners the edge.

Perhaps the biggest upgrade to the Spitfire was the replacement of the Merlin engine with the Rolls-Royce Griffon. The idea had been passed around since the opening weeks of the war, and finally came to operational fruition in October 1942 with the Mk XII. It would only see limited service; although an exceptional fighter below 20,000ft (6,096m), above that its performance quickly tailed off. The next Griffon version, the Mk XIV, had the improved Griffon 65 with a two-stage supercharger, giving it equally good performance at high altitude when it arrived in early 1943. In fact, on 5 October 1944 a Mk XIV became the first RAF fighter to shoot down a jet fighter.

The Griffon led to several design changes in the Spitfire. The more powerful engine required a larger propeller and nose cone, which added length to the aircraft and altered the centre of gravity. The stronger physical forces being experienced by the airframe also led to problems, with increased strain and fatigue on the structure. It took a while for the Spitfire to catch up, but eventually it did. The movement of a few internal components and an enlarged rudder helped with the balance, but further strengthening was needed. By the time the Mk 21 came along in early 1944, the changes which included enlarged radiators, widened undercarriage and reshaped cowlings, were finally pushing the classic Spitfire design to its limits. By now even the fuselage had changed. From late-model Mk IX Merlin and late-model Mk XIV Griffon engine variants, the top of the rear fuselage was cut down behind the cockpit and a 'tear drop' or 'bubble' canopy introduced to improve visibility.

The Mk 21 would require major re-engineering and an entirely new wing before it entered service in January 1945, one optimised for speeds and forces never envisaged by the original design team. This would be the last type to enter service during the Second World War, but further marques would follow. In operational terms, the Spitfire would also see active service around the world for many years to come, including seeing combat over Greece, across the Middle East and in the Far East. For the RAF, the last operational sortie came in 1963. A Griffon-

engined PR 19 went through trials against an English Electric Lightning, the RAF's most modern fighter, capable of speeds over twice the speed of sound and destined to serve until 1988. The trials were to gain experience in what is now called 'dissimilar air combat', to develop the tactics needed should the Lightning have to engage piston-engined aircraft, most likely in the Far East.

Just ten years passed between the Spitfires Mk I and Mk 24 entering service. In between there had been scores of variants, not just marques but also sub-marques with different armaments or wingtips, or many other minor changes. Almost every part of the aircraft changed between those first and last marques, and yet each type was still instantly recognisable as a Spitfire. The exact path of the aircraft is almost impossible to chart, with so many concurrent and overlapping development threads, and even the main marques did not flow in numerical order. However, the type can be tracked by its achievements. The interceptor that had only just been able to hold its own against the Messerschmitt Bf 109 in 1940 had grown and matured to an incredible extent. After playing a leading role in saving Britain in 1940, the Spitfire had gone on to be a key component in turning the tide in the Middle East, securing Malta and cutting the Axis supply lines across the Mediterranean. Further east still, the Spitfire had been crucial to stopping the Japanese advance into India, and then set up the conditions to allow the Allies to start pushing them back.

What had enabled this incredible journey was the superb basic design of the Spitfire. Although the development was not without missteps or problems along the way, the engineering of the airframe allowed it to deal with almost any changes and modifications that were needed. The Supermarine Spitfire went beyond being a war-winning weapon – it was a truly world-class piece of engineering.

## FURTHER READING

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# SUPERMARINE SEAFIRE

The seaborne Spitfire was a hastily assembled iteration for Britain's carriers

WORDS STUART HADAWAY



## WEAK POINT

The Seafire's propellers had relatively little ground clearance and breakages during hard landings, as the nose tipped forward, were common.

## FRAGILE UNDERCARRIAGE

The undercarriage of the Seafire was a perennial weak point, with successive marques receiving extended and strengthened legs.

## FOLDING TIPS

As well as the standard folding mechanism, the extreme tips of the Seafire's wings also folded down to give extra clearance in carrier hangers.

**A**fter being severely underfunded during the inter-war years, the Royal Navy entered the Second World War without a single modern carrier-borne fighter. The Hawker Hurricane was quickly adapted as the Sea Hurricane, but the type was becoming increasingly outdated. The Spitfire was a less robust aircraft than the Hurricane, especially with regards the undercarriage, and was not an obvious choice for enduring the rigours of carrier operations. However, in 1941, 48 Spitfire Mk Vbs were modified as the Seafire Ib, entering service in June 1942. Although fitted with arrestor hooks they received very few other modifications, but following types received increasing

specialisation until in late 1943 the Mk III entered service. The first Seafire not to be simply adapted from a Spitfire design, the Mk III had folding wings, strengthened fuselage and undercarriage, tropical filters and Rocket Assisted Take Off Gear (RATOG).

The Seafire would always have limitations compared to purpose-designed carrier aircraft. It was hampered by comparatively short ranges, despite receiving drop-tanks, and by its relatively weak undercarriage. Even so, the type saw valuable service around the world, especially in the Mediterranean and the Far East, and was the last British-operated Spitfire type to see combat, in 1950.



## SUPERMARINE SEAFIRE III

COMMISSIONED	1943
ORIGIN	BRITISH
LENGTH	30FT 2.6IN (9.21M)
WINGSPAN	36FT 10IN (11.23M)
ENGINE	1 X ROLLS-ROYCE MERLIN 55 1,585HP (1,182KW) V-12 INLINE
CREW	1
PRIMARY WEAPON	2 X 0.8IN (20MM) HISPANO CANNON AND 4 X 0.303IN (7.7MM) BROWNING MACHINE GUNS
SECONDARY WEAPON	UP TO 227KG (500LB) IN BOMBS



Seafires on the deck of a carrier entering the Grand Harbour, Malta

**“THE SEAFIRE WOULD ALWAYS HAVE LIMITATIONS COMPARED TO PURPOSE-DESIGNED CARRIER AIRCRAFT”**



Illustration: Nicholas Forder

### ARRESTOR DEVELOPMENT

An arrestor hook was crucial for carrier operations, but the Seafire's tail was too weak to take the stresses. The hook had to be moved forward to a far more awkward position.



Images: Getty, Alamy



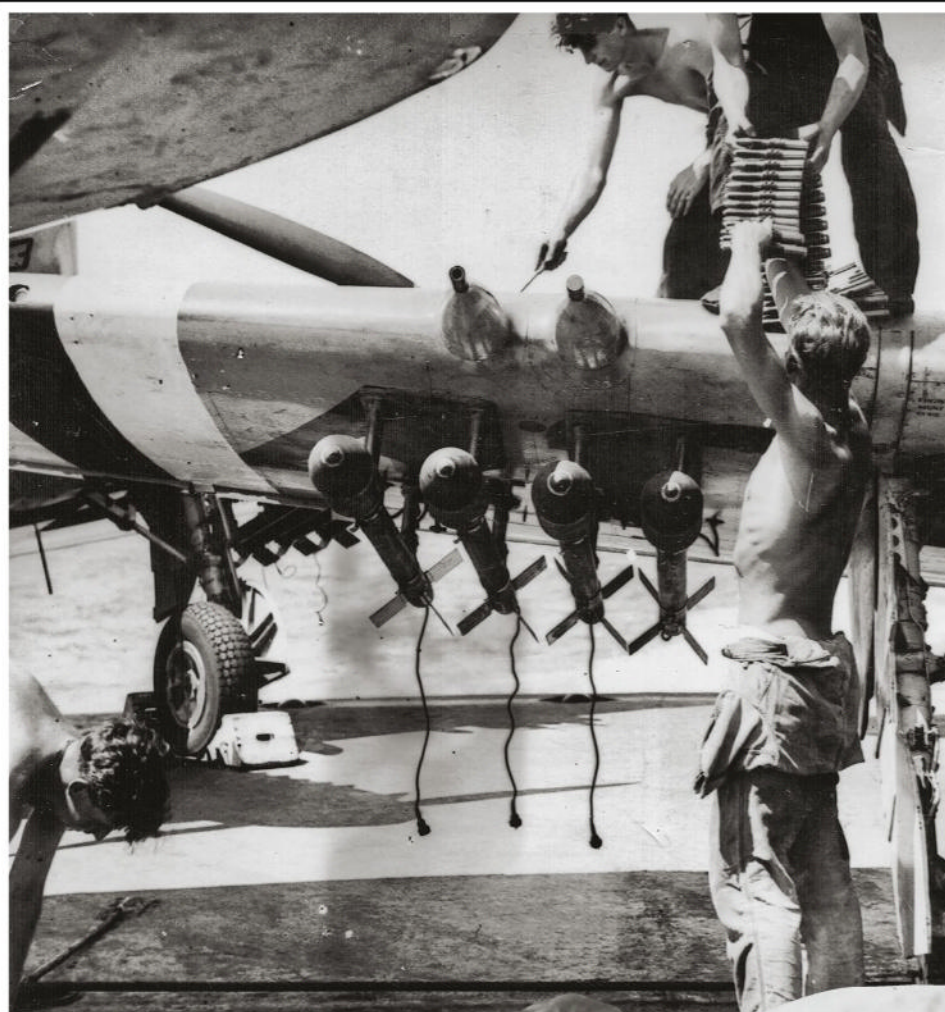
## ARMAMENT

The first version of the Seafire carried two 0.8in (20mm) Hispano cannon and four 0.303in (7.7mm) Browning machine guns. The following Mk III had the same primary weaponry, with the addition of either one 227kg (500lb) bomb under the fuselage or a 113kg (249lb) bomb under each wing. The later, Griffon-engined, versions just had two 0.8in cannon in each wing, and could carry increasing payloads of bombs and rockets. The final F 47 could carry a 227kg bomb or four 3in (76mm) rocket projectiles under each wing.

**“THE LATER, GRIFFON-ENGINE, VERSIONS JUST HAD TWO 20MM CANNON IN EACH WING, AND COULD CARRY INCREASING PAYLOADS OF BOMBS AND ROCKETS”**

*Left: A Seafire F 45 with two 20mm cannon in each wing*

*Below: Armourers load cannon ammunition into a rocket-armed Seafire off Korea, 1950*





## DESIGN

Operating from an aircraft carrier put incredible stresses on aircraft, and while the Spitfire was a superb piece of engineering it was not a robust one. To ensure sufficient structural strength to cope with the forces involved, the arrestor hook had to be placed quite far forward under the fuselage, making it awkward to use, while the undercarriage went through several reinforcements. The other major change compared to the Spitfire was the double-folding wings, with the wings folding up and then the tips folding a second time to give clearance between decks.

*This Seafire has a RATOG system attached to the upper wings to assist take-off*



## ENGINE

The Seafire followed the same engine trends as the Spitfire. The Mk Is were simply converted Spitfire Mk Vs, and the Seafire III, although a fresh design, used the Rolls-Royce Merlin 55M, rated at 1,585hp (1,182kW). With the Seafire XV the engine was upgraded to the Rolls-Royce Griffon VI, rated at 1,750hp (1,304kW) and needing a four-blade Rotol propeller. The last variant had a Griffon 85 rated at 2,375hp (1,771kW) that was so powerful that six-bladed contra-rotating propellers were needed to control the torque.

*A Seafire F 47, showing the contra-rotating propellers*





## SERVICE HISTORY

The Seafire Mk Ib entered service in mid-1942, followed by an improved Mk Ic later that year. Both saw combat during the Allied invasion of Morocco and Algeria in November. The first purpose-built Seafire, the Mk III, saw extensive service in 1943 during the invasion of Sicily, and then during the landings in Italy and the long advance up through that country. The Seafires provided fighter and tactical reconnaissance support to the Allied forces, and the following summer provided similar capabilities during the Normandy landings. Seafires provided target spotting for naval gunfire and later operated from airfields in the beachheads, escorting RAF fighter-bombers.

Later, they flew ground-attack operations over Malaya, and HMS Triumph's Seafires were the last of the type to see combat, over Korea in late 1950.

*A Seafire Mk IIc over HMS Indomitable 1943*



*A Seafire F 47 comes in to land on HMS Triumph off Korea*





Seafires are brought onto the deck of HMS Furious, 1944



The Seafire's forward-view problems are obvious on this Mk XVII



## COCKPIT

The Seafire's cockpit layout was essentially the same as the Spitfire's: a cramped single-seat design, with throttles on the left and a spade-grip control column in the centre, with the primary flight instruments grouped in front of the pilot. Visibility was always a problem, especially with the larger (and much noisier) Griffon blocking the forward view. A new canopy introduced in the final version, the F 47, was deeply unpopular as its curved front and thicker structural frames seriously impacted the pilot's view directly ahead, which could be fatal during carrier landings.



Above: The Seafire cockpit, showing the control column and primary flight instruments

Images: Getty, Alamy

**"SOME OF THE SEAFIRE'S MOST VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS WERE IN THE FAR EAST. THEY PROVIDED COMBAT AIR PATROLS TO PROTECT THE BRITISH PACIFIC FLEET ACROSS THE INDIAN OCEAN AND INTO JAPANESE WATERS IN THE SUMMER OF 1945"**



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## AUSTRALIA'S IRISH REBELLION

# BATTLE OF VINEGAR HILL

In New South Wales, an armed mob of convicts confronted the local garrison and militia in an attempt to continue the uprising of 1798

WORDS MURRAY DAHM

**O**n 5 March 1804, a group of 233 convict rebels who had revolted against their incarceration in the British colony of New South Wales (corresponding to modern-day Sydney, Australia) were met by the local garrison of 28-30 regulars and a few loyalist militia. The two groups clashed at a place some 25 miles (40km) northwest of Sydney, soon dubbed Vinegar Hill. Some of the rebel convicts had been involved in the 1798 Irish Rebellion and had, in 1799, been transported to Australia as punishment. The battle in Australia was named after the Battle of Vinegar Hill (in Irish Cath Chnoc Fhíodh na gCaor) that had been fought in June 1798 in County Wexford,

where British forces had defeated the Irish rebels. Although the Irish battle had not been decisive in the crushing of the rebellion, as is sometimes claimed, the battle in Australia was indeed decisive and quickly ended the Australian rebellion. This was the first and most serious convict uprising in Australia and the first battle between Europeans on its shores.

Although the exact location of the battle is still debated, it most likely took place at Rouse Hill, further to the northwest and close to the important region in the colony known as Castle Hill (the rebellion is also known as the Castle Hill Rebellion). These were the hills six miles (10km) north of Parramatta (the site of the governor of the colony's

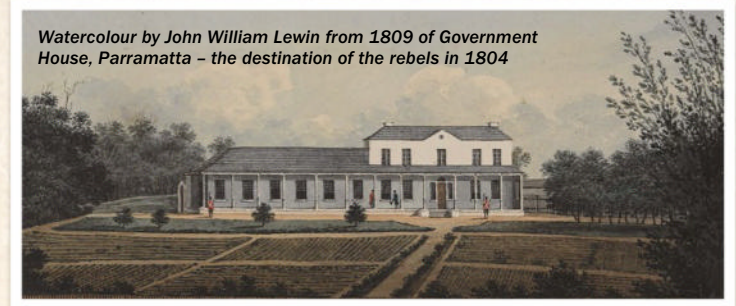


residence, Government House) and where government farms had been established early in the colony's history in the 1790s to feed the growing community. The majority of the farm workers were Irish Catholic convicts, especially those who had been transported in 1799 and who had been labelled 'politicals' – transported without trial to Australia for the term of their natural lives, never to be allowed to return to Britain. A new government farm (the third) was established in 1801 and in 1802 this farm was referred to as Castle Hill for the first time. Castle Hill was an entirely convict enterprise – the first free settler didn't arrive in the area until 1802 (it is still the name of a suburb of Sydney today).

In July 1803 another failed rebellion was launched in Ireland, led by Robert Emmet in Dublin. When news of this failure reached the colony of New South Wales it led to the 1804 rebellion. The leaders of the rebels were the convicts Phillip Cunningham and William Johnston (sometimes spelt as Johnson). Cunningham was a veteran of the 1798 uprising who had also been involved in a failed mutiny on the convict ship *Anne* while bound for Australia in 1799.

The leaders' plan was for 685 rebels from Castle Hill to join with 1,100 more convicts and convict-sympathisers from the land surrounding the Hawkesbury River further north. The rebels planned to converge at Constitution Hill, two miles (3.5km) northwest of Parramatta. They would then march on Parramatta and then Sydney itself, then known as Port Jackson, some 14 miles (22km) to the east. There are differing accounts of the rebel aims – some claim they wanted to establish Irish rule in the colony, others that they intended to escape by ship to China or provide passage for those who wanted to return to Ireland and reignite the 1803 rebellion. There was even the idea that they would march across the Blue Mountains to the west and walk to China in the mistaken belief that China was close to the colony and reachable by land. In fact it was more than 4,350 miles (7,000km) away, not to mention the inhospitable centre of Australia, the sea and other countries in between!

At 8:00am on 4 March 1804, another of the rebel ringleaders, John Cavenah, set fire to his hut. This was the agreed signal for the beginning of the rebellion. The uprising



*Watercolour by John William Lewin from 1809 of Government House, Parramatta – the destination of the rebels in 1804*

was already in trouble, however, since convicts in Windsor, on the Hawkesbury 16 miles (25km) to the northwest, did not see the smoke from the fire and so did not launch their part of the plan. In addition, with so many moving parts, secrecy was impossible. The commander of the garrison at Parramatta, Captain Edward Abbot, had already learned that a breakout was imminent, and was able to quickly send word to the governor, Philip Gidley King, in Sydney.

Nonetheless, Cunningham led some 300 men and they seized weapons, ammunition and food from the government buildings at the Castle Hill farm. They then spent the rest of the day marching towards Constitution Hill, taking more weapons and recruiting (or press-ganging) more rebels on the way. News of the rebellion spread quickly, and panic spread among the free population (about 5,000 at the time). Some fled to safety towards Sydney. Informed of the rebellion, King made his way with his escort of Light Horse (possibly only five light dragoons) to Parramatta to take command, while Lieutenant Governor Colonel William Patterson mustered more troops stationed in Sydney itself. The men of HMS *Calcutta* and the Sydney Loyal Association militia would guard Sydney while the 54 or 56 men of the New South Wales Corps would march through the night to Parramatta and then reinforce the small garrison of troops already there. Major George Johnston, commander of the Sydney troops, was at Annandale some three miles (5km) west of Sydney, and when the troops arrived there from their Sydney barracks he made his way to Parramatta.

The men from the New South Wales Corps departed for Parramatta at 1:30am on 5 March. King arrived there at 3:00am and declared martial law under the Mansfield Doctrine – an idea dating back to the 1688 Bill of Rights that a posse comitatus (literally the 'power of the country'), and usually made up of civilians, could include soldiers of the

**Left:** The anonymous 1804 painting now in the National Library of Australia showing the various details of the battle and its aftermath

**Below:** The Rouse family in front of their house in 1859 – probably built on the site of the battle, the land granted to the pro-government Richard Rouse after the battle





## AUSTRALIA'S IRISH REBELLION

Crown if they were acting as citizens protecting their legal and constitutional rights. Thus soldiers could be deployed as part of a posse against a domestic disturbance such as the rebellion. Under usual circumstances the military should have played no part in suppressing what was a domestic disturbance. There was a later trial in England in 1811 where Major Johnston was court-martialled and found guilty of mutiny for his actions in putting down the rebellion in Australia; he was, however, only cashiered.

The area affected by King's declaration of martial law included Castle Hill, the Hawkesbury Region and the land around the Nepean River to the west. A curfew was put in place and an amnesty offered to any rebels if they surrendered within 24 hours. Major Johnston arrived at Parramatta just before dawn on the 5th and was given orders to advance against the rebels, who were thought to be gathered to the west of Government House. If the rebels were no longer there, he was to advance towards Castle Hill until he found them. Then he would await further orders, although he was given permission to fire on anyone who opposed him.

After only a 20-minute break for breakfast for the men, Major Johnston set out with the troops of the New South Wales Corps, some civilian volunteers and militia. Members of the Parramatta Loyal Association militia were called out (36 of them) and given the duty of guarding Parramatta. Major Johnston advanced in two columns – one, under his command (28 men and a dozen civilians, commanded by Quartermaster Thomas Laycock), headed towards Constitution Hill and Toongabbie, four miles (7km) northwest of Parramatta. Some accounts place more militia (up to 67 of them) with the major. Subaltern Davies led the second column with the remaining men north along Castle Hill Road, towards Castle Hill itself.

The rebels had gathered at Constitution Hill near Toongabbie but several groups had become lost during the night and were unable to find the main body. Another small group tried to attack Parramatta by themselves but were turned back by the presence of the militia. Other groups did find their way to Constitution Hill; there, arms were distributed and the men put into a rough drill order. It is estimated that the rebels possessed more than one-third of all the firearms present in the colony at the time. With so many disparate groups (and the uprising already betrayed), however, surprise was impossible. In addition to the potential rebels in Windsor failing to receive news of the rebellion, others in Parramatta and Sydney also didn't learn of the outbreak of hostilities until it was too late.

At Constitution Hill, Cunningham was elected king of the 'Australian Empire' and the territory they would control was declared 'New Ireland'. When the expected reinforcements failed to materialise, however, Cunningham was forced to withdraw westwards. Although he still expected to meet reinforcements coming from Windsor and by press-ganging others into service, his numbers dwindled to only 233 by the time he reached Rouse Hill. However, some accounts give his numbers as nearer 300 men.

Major Johnston continued his pursuit of the rebels. Expecting to find them at Constitution Hill and then

*The arrest of governor William Bligh in January 1808, ordered by Johnston during the Rum Rebellion – from a contemporary anonymous 1808 cartoon*



Toongabbie, he discovered both positions abandoned by the rebels. He was then informed that the rebels were heading northwest, towards the Hawkesbury River. Despite his troops being exhausted from their march of around 16 miles (25km) and not being equipped for a long pursuit, he set off.

Major Johnston came across the rebels at Rouse Hill, about six miles (10km) from Toongabbie. He had expected some 400 rebels but encountered only 233 men. He sent a mounted trooper forward with the governor's offer of amnesty following early surrender, but this met with no success. Nor did the dispatching of an Irish Catholic priest, Father James Dixon – who had been transported for his involvement in the 1798 rebellion – dissuade the rebels from their rebellion. Finally, the major himself went forward with another mounted trooper (an ex-convict, trooper Thomas Anlezark, only pardoned in June 1803).

The men, now under command of Quartermaster Laycock, drew up in firing lines as he went forward. When called upon to parley, Cunningham replied: "Death or Liberty, Major!" The Major apparently retorted: "You scoundrel, I'll liberate you!" Major Johnston and the trooper then drew their pistols and held both Cunningham and William Johnston under arrest. The drama and belligerence of their verbal exchange would seem better placed after or as the pistols were drawn. However, here accounts become confused in the records and the events may have occurred at the same moment as, or before, the arrest of the rebel leaders.

While the prisoners were being led back to government lines, Laycock commenced firing on the rebel ranks, inflicting 15 casualties. It may well be that the shooting actually commenced first, and this led to the arrest of the rebel leaders. Otherwise the drawing of pistols and the arrest of the leaders under parley was poor form at least and in breach of the accepted rules of engagement and gentlemanly conduct of the time. Having fired their volley,

*Below: Oil colour in the style of Thomas Watlings showing the view of Sydney (Port Jackson), in 1799*





the government troops then charged the rebels. At this point Laycock slashed Cunningham with his cutlass while he was being led back towards government lines. This, too, implies that Cunningham was not under the control of the major or Anlezark in that moment or that he had attempted to break away from them at the time of the volley and charge. Cunningham was gravely wounded but not killed.

Robbed of both leaders, the rebels made a single futile effort to return fire which resulted in a ragged but ineffectual volley. Despite their overwhelming numbers in comparison to the forces opposing them, they then broke and fled. Pursuit of the rebels continued late into the night and 30 more were killed during the hunt. In the following days Johnston prevented further bloodshed than might have been expected.

Cunningham's exclamation of "Death or Liberty, Major!" became part of Australian folklore. During the 1851-54 Eureka Rebellion during the Victoria Gold Rush, and at the battle of the Eureka Stockade at Ballarat on 3 December 1854, his phrase was used as the rebels' password.

Although there was a place named Vinegar Hill close by (and which was so named soon after the battle) and the battle memorial is located at a place called Castlebrook Lawn Cemetery (just south of Rouse Hill in the modern suburb of Kellyville Ridge), the actual battle site is lost. An estate nearby,

however, was later granted to Richard Rouse (his name gave the area its name of Rouse Hill – it may be that this name deliberately supplanted Vinegar Hill for the area).

Rouse was an entrenched government supporter and it would seem most likely that a small hill on his estate, east of the house he built and close by the modern road, was the actual site of the battle. The land may have been granted to Rouse as a way, perhaps, of avoiding it being a place of veneration commemorated by survivors or a place of fermentation for future potential rebels. Building seems to have begun on the site in 1813 and the existing house, which is a Living History Museum, has sections dating back to this first period of construction – although the grant was not formalised until October 1816.

The only contemporary depiction of the battle is an anonymous watercolour now in the National Library of Australia. It was probably painted soon after the battle and depicts several moments in the rebellion, the battle and its aftermath simultaneously: the preaching of Father Dixon, the parley and arrest of Cunningham and Johnston, Laycock's cutting down of Cunningham (thus Cunningham is represented twice in the scene), the government troops firing, the casualties and breaking of the rebels and, in the background on the left, the subsequent hanging of the leaders of the rebellion.

The painting also has speech bubbles for several of the characters so we get the famous exchange: "Death or Liberty, Major!" from Cunningham and Major Johnston's reply: "You scoundrel, I'll liberate you!" We can note that several accounts of the battle exclude the word 'major' from Cunningham's reply. The painting also provides remarkable contemporary details including two mounted figures – Major Johnston (in a Tarleton helmet and wearing a red coat), and Anlezark (who seems to be in the blue coat and red trim of a light dragoon). Laycock is shown in long red coat and brimmed hat. The men are in 1800-02 pattern British uniforms and the militia in brimmed hats with predominately blue coats. Cunningham and Johnston are shown in (rather fine) civilian dress and the Catholic priest, Father James Dixon, is there too in black.

The week following the battle saw reprisals and arrests, and old scores being settled which had little to do with the rebellion. Many men rounded up claimed they had been press-ganged into the rebellion and were not willing participants. Martial law and the amnesty, too, was extended until 10 March. Nine men were executed by hanging, including the wounded Cunningham (he may even have died of his wounds already and was then hung even though already dead) and Johnston the following day, without trial.

Seven men were whipped, but the numbers of men subjected to these punishments vary in different accounts. Twenty-three rebels were sent to the coal mines at Coal River 75 miles (120km) north of Sydney, later named Newcastle) and 34 were placed in chains. The remainder were threatened with being sent to Norfolk Island if they breached good behaviour.



An 1810 portrait of (now) Lieutenant Colonel George Johnston just before his court martial

## FURTHER READING

- David Hill *Convict Colony* (Allen & Unwin, 2019)
- Marion McGuirk *The Battle of Vinegar Hill March 1804 – Our Pioneers* (Toongabbie & District Historical Society Incorporated, 2004)
- Chrissie Michaels *Castle Hill Rebellion* (Scholastic Australia, 2019)
- Lynette Silver *The Battle of Vinegar Hill: Australia's Irish rebellion, 1804* (Doubleday, 1989)





## Heroes of the Victoria Cross

# DONALD CAMERON

In September 1943, as part of Operation Source, this Royal Navy Reserve lieutenant stationed his midget submarine beneath Germany's most powerful warship and laid explosive charges – with devastating results

WORDS MARK WOOD

**E**dgling his midget submarine X-6 stealthily through the anti-torpedo netting in place in Kaafjord, Norway, in the wake of a small coaster, Lieutenant Donald Cameron, RNR, slowly guided his craft towards the German battleship Tirpitz at anchor in the fjord.

Cameron had begun his sea service with the Merchant Fleet, joining in 1931 at the age of 17, and in August 1939 he was accepted into the Royal Naval Reserve as a commissioned officer. Cameron was appointed navigating officer of HMS Sturgeon, assigned to the Second Submarine Flotilla in November 1940, having recently married Eve Kilpatrick of the Women's Royal Naval Service. Selected for 'special service' with X-craft, the Royal Navy's new midget submarines, Cameron was appointed first lieutenant of XE3, the prototype in build at that time in Southampton. X-3 was launched on 15 March 1942 and commenced trials at Portsmouth and Portland prior to relocating to Scotland for further tests and crew training. Cameron transferred to Loch Bannatyne, Isle of Bute, headquarters of 12 Submarine Flotilla (X-craft) in September and at the close of 1942 was selected as commanding officer X-6.

The X-craft was developed from the prototype design of Commander Cromwell Hanford Varley

DSC, RN, an experienced submariner of the Great War and pioneer of the original 'human torpedo' project of 1909. Accepted into service in 1939, the X design, crewed by four officers and ratings, was 52ft (16m) in length with a beam of 5.7ft (1.75m), displacing 30 tons and armed with two 4,400lb (1,996kg) detachable amatol charges, which were to be placed below the target. X-craft had a limited sub-surface range and were intended to be towed to the

target area by a 'mother' submarine, usually a Royal Navy S or T class vessel, which would then rendezvous after completion of the attack and tow the X-craft back to its home port.

The sinking of the German battleship Bismarck by the Royal Navy in May 1941 left its sister ship Tirpitz as the most powerful warship afloat. Despite several aborted operations against Allied convoys carrying war materiel and equipment to the Soviet ports of Archangel and Murmansk, Tirpitz, joined by Scharnhorst in March 1943, presented an existential threat to the convoy system in northern waters. Concerned by this ever-present danger, Prime Minister Winston Churchill tasked Admiral Sir Max Horton, Flag Officer Submarines, with neutralising the danger lurking in Norwegian waters. Operation Source, an ambitious plan to destroy Tirpitz, Scharnhorst and the pocket battleship Lutzow was conceived by Horton, who delegated the planning to Commander Varley and his team. Varley set about devising an operation utilising the new X-craft to penetrate the defensive screen around the warships and cripple or destroy them with explosives.

Weather conditions forecast for the Norwegian fjords appeared most favourable between 20-25 September, so the 19th of the month was the last feasible date to tow the X-craft out to Norwegian waters and detach them with their operational crew in place. Four S class and two T class submarines were earmarked to tow the six X-craft, and on the 11 September the



**Right:** The midget submarine X-6 during training exercises off the coast of Scotland

Images: Alamy, Getty



*Lieutenant Donald Cameron  
during preparations for  
Operation Source*

“TIRPITZ, JOINED BY  
SCHARNHORST IN MARCH 1943,  
PRESENTED AN EXISTENTIAL  
THREAT TO THE CONVOY SYSTEM  
IN NORTHERN WATERS”



## HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS

midget submarines commenced their journey from a position 75 miles (121km) west of the Shetland Islands. In the early evening light of 21 September, Cameron guided X-6 through the coastal minefields and took up station off the Brattholm Islands at the entrance of Kaafjord to await the start of the operation.

Cameron's crew were experienced hands consisting of Lieutenant John Lorimer as first lieutenant, Sub Lieutenant Richard Kendall and Engine Room Artificer Edmund Goddard as engineer. Tirpitz was screened by two torpedo nets and Cameron considered deception to be his only chance of passing through these nets. On 22 September, as the sun began to set, a netting boom opened to admit a small coaster returning inebriated German sailors back on board after an evening ashore – Cameron seized the opportunity and steered X-6 close behind to within 10ft (3m) of the vessel before the boom closed. His luck, however, was about to change. The periscope and gyroscope of X-6 malfunctioned at this crucial juncture and the midget submarine struck an uncharted sub-surface rock formation, forcing it to momentarily surface – alerting observant sentries onboard Tirpitz to its presence.

Despite these setbacks, Cameron was able to position X-6 beneath Tirpitz and off-load the primed amatol charges directly below the German warship. It was obvious to the crew of X-6 that there would be no escape, having already attracted sustained gunfire from the small arms of the sentries and the ship's 0.8in (20mm) flak 30 secondary armament. Cameron made the decision to open the sea-cocks, scuttling the vessel before he and

his crew were retrieved from the water and taken prisoner. Lorimer recalled after the war that as they boarded Tirpitz under guard, he asked Cameron: "Skipper, shall we salute the quarterdeck?" "Why, of course," Cameron replied, which they did – to the astonishment of the German sailors.

Likewise X-7, commanded by Lieutenant Godfrey Place, had managed to lay its charges. However, having been depth-charged the midget submarine sank, taking two of the crew down with it. Place was taken prisoner. Realising that his ship was in mortal danger Kapitän zur See Hans Meyer ordered a starboard turn from the ship's stern using the anchor and mooring cables. This was the only possible course of action given that building sufficient steam pressure to sail out of danger would take at least an hour.

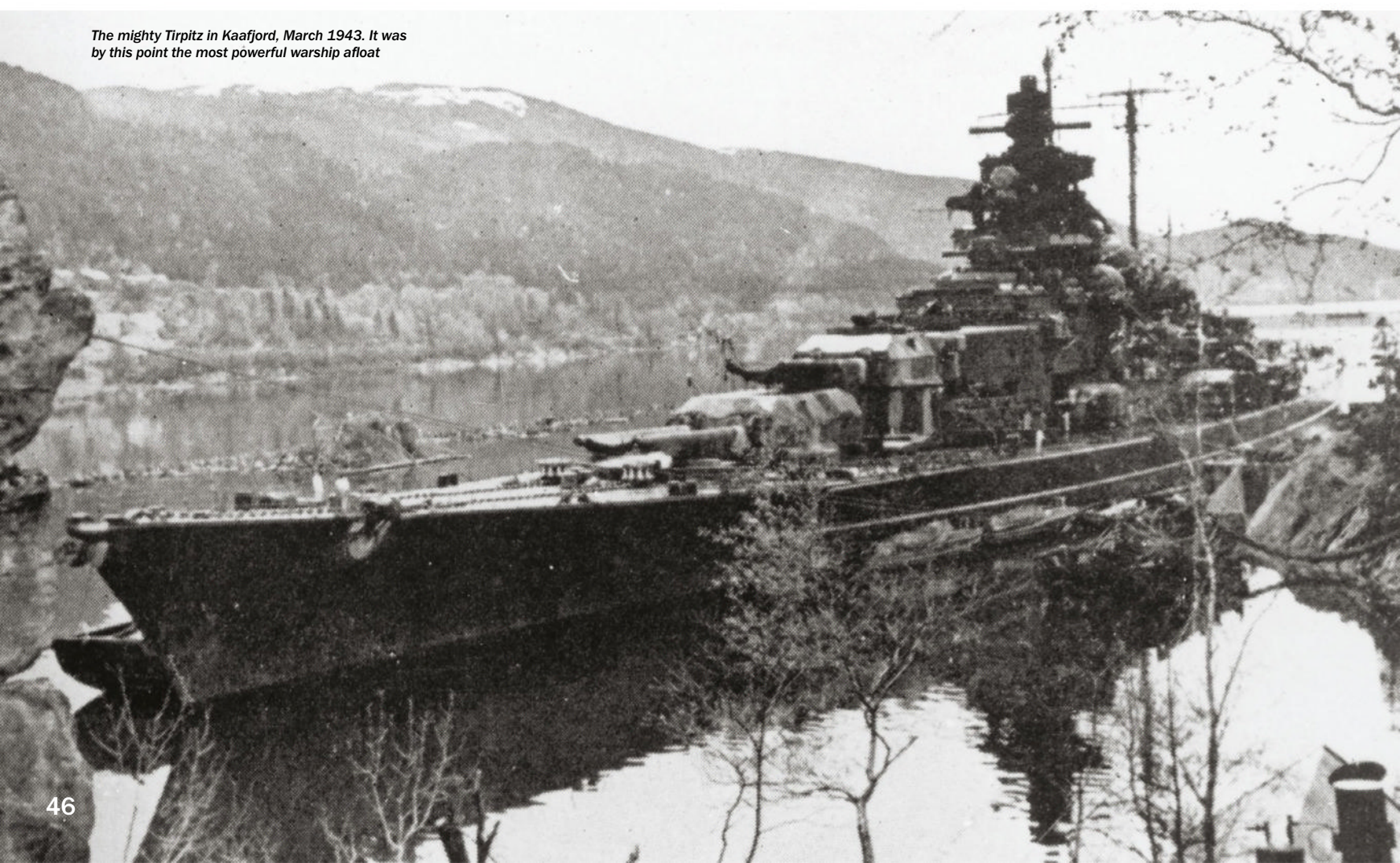
Meyer's desperate actions were too late. At 8.12am two huge explosions occurred almost simultaneously. Tirpitz was seen to lift some three feet out of the water as an oil tank ruptured and armour plating buckled in the force of the blast. The double bottom of the ship was lacerated and 1400 tonnes of freezing water gushed in, flooding both generator compartments, rendering all but one turbo generator inoperative and disrupting all electrical power. Two of the large 15in (380mm) gun turrets were displaced from their mountings and the shafts of the screws were damaged, while two of the ship's four Arado seaplanes were blown overboard. Most operational mounted equipment such as range finders and fire control instruments were destroyed and all radars failed. Tirpitz was by this point listing



Above: The Daily Telegraph reports the success of the midget submarine force during Operation Source

30 degrees and two generator vessels were ordered to proceed immediately to the aid of the stricken vessel. After consultations with the Führer, Commander in Chief of the Kriegsmarine Karl Doenitz instructed maintenance teams that repairs were to be carried out in situ. Due to the extensive damage, most notably the buckling of the frame beams, which would require

The mighty Tirpitz in Kaafjord, March 1943. It was by this point the most powerful warship afloat







Cameron (right) at his investiture, Buckingham Palace, June 1945. Godfrey Place stands to the left

many months of repair in dry dock, it was considered that Tirpitz could not be returned to complete seaworthiness.

Undeterred, specialists from the repair and supply vessel Neumarck and technical personnel drawn from the crew of Tirpitz managed to effectively repair the vessel within six months. The Allies still viewed Tirpitz as a significant risk in northern waters and on 22 November 1944 the vessel was sunk by a force of 32 Lancaster bombers of 9 and 317 Squadrons using Tallboy bombs.

Cameron was held prisoner at Marlag O, a POW camp for British and Canadian Merchant and Royal Navy personnel sited northeast of Bremen. He was released in 1945. Both Cameron and Place were awarded the Victoria Cross, gazetted on 22 February 1944 and invested by King George VI at Buckingham Palace on 22 June 1945. Part of Place and Cameron's citation

**"TIRPITZ WAS SEEN TO LIFT  
SOME THREE FEET OUT OF  
THE WATER AS AN OIL TANK  
RUPTURED AND ARMOUR  
PLATING BUCKLED IN THE  
FORCE OF THE BLAST"**

reads: "The courage, endurance and utter contempt for danger in the immediate face of the enemy shown by Lieutenants Place and Cameron during this determined and successful attack were supreme."

Cameron suffered from ill health after the war and died at the Royal Navy's hospital RNH Haslar at Gosport on April 10 1961. After cremation at Portchester his ashes were scattered off Portsmouth from the submarine HMS Thule three days later. In his hometown of Carluke in Lanarkshire, Scotland, a blue plaque was unveiled in May 2022 with the Lord Lieutenant of Lanarkshire, civil dignitaries and senior naval officers present, commemorating Cameron's achievements. At the ceremony his daughter Amanda Prideaux said: "He was very humble about it all and said he did it because he was there and I think he would always more remember those who didn't come back. As a family we feel immensely proud to be descended from such a distinguished but immensely private man."

Donald Cameron's VC resides at the Imperial War Museum as part of the Lord Ashcroft collection.



# TORNADO IN A STORM



On the first day of Operation Desert Storm, Flight Lieutenant John Nichol was shot down while attacking an Iraqi air base. Here he shares his memories of the First Gulf War, what it was like ejecting over the desert and his time as a POW

WORDS TIM WILLIAMSON



**W** hat do you remember about the buildup to Operation Desert Storm? When it all started back in August 1990 [with] the invasion of Kuwait...

It was a lightning bolt out of the blue... The Tornado Force had never been used in anger and I think many of us didn't think it ever would [be]. Because it was a tactical Nuclear Strike Force it was designed for the Cold War to stop the Soviets coming over what was then the East German border. So it was bloody exciting – the notion of doing the job for real. We were like firefighters who'd never been to a blaze, and suddenly somebody had lit a bloody great fire!

Different parts of the Tornado Force were sent out at different times and so training started, but the first people went out within a few hours and then some [thought]: "We're not prepared. We're gonna die." By the time we got there in December it was enormous... It was something like a million troops in the desert ready to go. We landed in Bahrain and I've never seen anything like it. There were hundreds of tactical and support aircraft and when you flew over any of the Saudi airfields, they were just rammed. If you flew over the desert you would look down on these encampments of hundreds of thousands of troops. The scale was enormous.

**What sort of preparations and training did you take part in?**

We'd been training for months, preparing gradually until when we were told my squadron was deploying, which was probably the August or the September. Then we went into an intense period of training in the UK. We were based in Germany and you can't fly low that much in Germany. It's quite restrictive. So flying down to a hundred feet, which is what we were training to do, in peace time this was all done in the UK.

We were in intense training during the summer; air-to-air refuelling, tactical profiles, [which continued] when we got out to the desert. The Tornado was a low-level tactical force, so low-level night flying... eight aircraft in formation at night, no lights, practising blind attacks. The equipment's doing most of the attacking and you're trying to keep the equipment up-to-date and that was scary.

We were flying in the dark at 100, 150 or 200ft with no lights on, there were no night-vision goggles. I think a couple of people had a pair, but you had to hold them up to your eye like some sort of glasses or something and they weren't integrated into the aircraft. So they were useless. [But] this is what the tornado was designed to do: using the terrain-following radar to 200ft or the radio altimeter down to about 100ft, which is just astonishingly dangerous because you can't see anything in front of you. So if somebody's built 110ft mast, you're gonna fly into it and



**Above:** Nichol (back) with John Peters before their first flight together since being shot down in 1991

**Right:** An abandoned Soviet-made Anti-Air Artillery piece, used to defend an Iraqi air base



**“WE WERE LIKE FIREFIGHTERS WHO'D NEVER BEEN TO A BLAZE, AND SUDDENLY SOMEBODY HAD LIT A BLOODY GREAT FIRE!”**



*Tornado training in the desert at low level, armed with the JP233 anti-runway weapon system*

Image: John Nichol

die. But that was our *raison d'être*. That was our mode of operation.

That training buildup was intense but very few of us thought we would ever start the war, right up until probably two or three days before. But even then I personally thought the politicians would sort this out, and then suddenly we were going and I really remember that moment.

It would have been 16 January because my formation started its shift at about 11pm or 10pm and I could hear my squadron singing the squadron song that was sung before the final attack of every training exercise, which was the mass nuclear launch – at the end of the world, you sang the song.

I went in and I could hear this song... and I said to my pilot JP: "We're going." I still get shivers now thinking about that. That was an astonishing moment of personal reality.

## **What did you know about your target and your role in the opening day of the war?**

Our boss and the guy who was planning the operations knew what the targets were going

to be for the first three days, but we absolutely did not know. So the first night attack was revealed to the crews a few hours before, and then our target was revealed that night. Without releasing it, we'd been practising an almost identical profile for the previous week... So [we were told]: "Here's your target, it is on the border, you're gonna go along here to refuel, drop down across the border, go this way, you come out, the tanker will meet you here and then you'll come home." The last bit didn't happen.

## **You were the second sortie of your squadron to attack. Did you get any sense at all of what to expect?**

We were listening on the military radio. Tallil air base was attacked at 2am so they were heading home at about 3am or 4am, and we were listening to it on the radio while we were doing our planning ... We heard them checking in ready to come back to the airfield, and none of us believed that they would all come home.

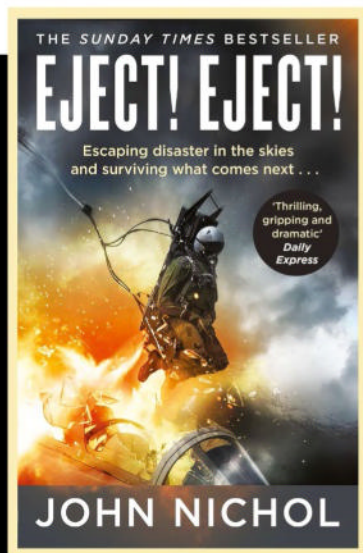
We thought a number of aircraft would be shot down because it was so dangerous and we were flying over the most heavily defended

targets apart from Baghdad itself, at low level. So when we heard all eight jets from our squadron coming home, I was astonished that everybody had come out unscathed. It was definitely not what I'd expected.

As we were walking out to get into our aircraft to go, which was four in the morning so the sun was coming up [and] my best mate was walking back in. He'd been on the first attack with another couple of my close friends and my flight commander who said something like: "F\*\*k it was astonishing. Tubes of molten explosive metal everywhere." And then he said: "But don't worry, you'll be okay." Nobody had ever seen Triple-A [Anti-Aircraft Artillery] before, nobody had ever seen it. Their description was it was like being in a cauldron of a fire in the middle of the night... My mate said: "Yeah you'll be fine. We'll see you in a few hours." Of course they were coming back in and that's the last time I saw them for seven weeks.

## **How well prepared were you for Anti-Aircraft Artillery fire?**

It had never really been spoken about. All of our training had been to counter the Iraqi



# EJECT! EJECT!

## Escaping disaster in the skies and surviving what comes next

The updated paperback of John Nichol's bestselling history of ejection seats, the pioneers who invented them and the incredible stories of the aviators whose lives they saved, is available now from Simon & Schuster.

**Right:** Photographs of Nichol's crashed Tornado including the RB199 engine, weapon pylon and part of the fuselage





# PRISONER IN BAGHDAD

After being captured, Nichol endured over seven weeks of captivity, during which he was beaten, tortured and paraded on television by the Iraqis

Upon landing after ejecting, Nichol and his pilot JP realised how unprepared they were to survive in the desert, let alone evade the enemy. "There'd been a bit of a classroom lecture on desert survival... but almost nothing," he recalls. "There was no training about what we now refer to as conduct after capture. That changed completely because of our experiences."

When the Iraqis found him, Nichol feared the worst: "I certainly thought I'd be murdered or tortured to death. We had no concept about the reality of what was going to happen."

Now a prisoner, Nichol was isolated, interrogated and tortured for days, before being paraded on Iraqi television. During his incarceration, he was completely cut off from the outside world. "For maybe for three or four weeks... I never saw or heard another person, because you're behind a 3in thick steel door in a concrete [room] with 3ft thick walls," he recalls. "Obviously the one thing that you did know was that bombing was going on because you could hear it every night and... depending on where you were, you were being bombed." Due to the heavy propaganda being broadcast on the Iraqi media, even the prison guards were unaware of the reality of what was happening on the front line. "Sometimes the guards would listen to the radio and every now and then say: 'We shot down 50 of your aircraft today.' We had no idea of this was real or not."

Nonetheless, the war going on outside eventually found its way to Nichol's prison, which was bombed by coalition aircraft, almost killing the POWs. "One of the military bases we were at was bombed and I nearly died on two occasions," he recalls. "You could hear the jets overhead and you heard the bombs going off, and the air raid sirens and the guns firing."

On 28 February, gunfire and celebrations could be heard outside the prison. "The cacophony of yelling and cheering and the guns firing into the air was terrifying because you didn't know what was going on. The Iraqi media had announced that they had won. I was in a cell with somebody else and we [decided] there's three possibilities: either the war's over and they've won, there's some special forces in the area coming to get us, or the war's over and we've won. But we didn't know."

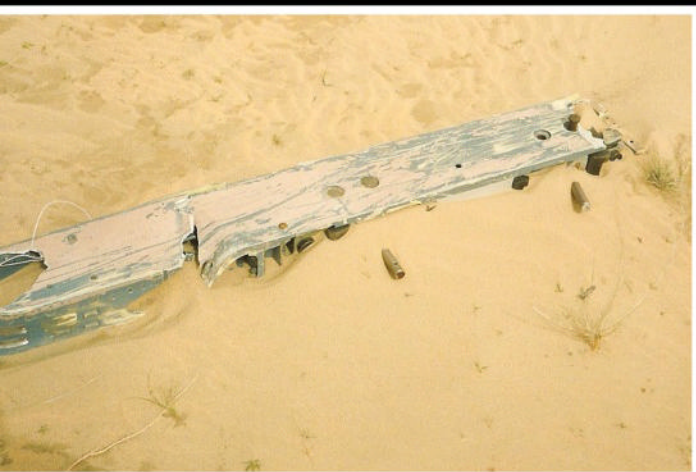
On 5 May, Nichol and his comrades finally received the news they'd been waiting for: "An Iraqi soldier came into the cell and said: 'The war's over, you can go home.' We walked out and then I saw people: Andy McNab was standing there, some of my squadron [and some] that I didn't know from other squadrons, but I knew they were aircrew. [Then] we were handed over to the Red Crescent in a Baghdad Hotel."



A US soldier at Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad. Nichol was held here after his capture

**"I CERTAINLY THOUGHT I'D BE MURDERED OR TORTURED TO DEATH. WE HAD NO CONCEPT ABOUT THE REALITY OF WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN"**

Now free and relatively safe, Nichol and his fellow POWs still had to endure a number of tense hours before they were transported to friendly territory. "We were in the middle of Baghdad... there were crowds screaming, shooting and at any point they could have come in and got us. There's no doubt about that. Even the next day when we were taken to the airport and we were on the Red Crescent aircraft to fly out... All the Iraqi gunners on the ground had their guns trained on the aircraft. It could have all gone hideously wrong right up until we took off and got down towards the border. As soon as we were down towards south of Baghdad then we had F-15s coming to escort us – that was astonishing. That's when we thought: "Okay, we're safe now."



Images: John Nichol



## TORNADO IN A STORM



*Hand-painted mission symbols on a Tornado GR1 at King Faisal Air Base in Saudi Arabia*

Air Force and their surface-to-air-missiles that defended the major bases, like SAM 3 or SAM 6. We had electronic warfare pods, we had chaff, we had flares... so all of our preparations were against that kind of threat, because you can't do anything about Triple-A. But nobody knew the effect it would have on you.

At night, you could see the Triple-A coming up which was astonishing... But in daylight, you couldn't really see it, it was just something in the background as we flew in... You could certainly see the odd puff of smoke as a shell exploded, but you had no concept that behind every little puff of smoke there's thousands more exploding bullets going off.

### ***What can you recall about the moment you were shot down?***

It was somebody on the ground, there were Iraqi emplacements everywhere – as we

would have if we were there, we would have shoulder-held surface-to-air missiles... and it was one of those.

After the war they [recovered] bits of the [plane's] wreckage, and you can see holes in the sidewinder missile where the shrapnel from the missile exploded and went through. So it was somebody on the ground, [with a] heat-seeking missile from the rear-right quarter, because we never saw it coming... If we'd seen it coming clearly we could have deployed flares in an effort to evade it. Now there's automatic devices that can give missile approach warnings that can do that kind of thing. We didn't have any of that.

This was 1991 in a Tornado GR1, which is the first Mark of tornado. So... it's 1960s-70s technology. It really was old-fashioned. It was still an incredibly capable aircraft but by modern standards it was a solid bus, but an old bus.

### ***What do you remember about ejecting over the desert?***

Unlike other people, we had a few minutes to prepare. After we'd been hit we tried to get it back together. The aircraft was in a pretty poor state. We had maybe 30 seconds after being hit to try to see if we were going to be able to get home, but the aircraft was on fire. [We could] see flames coming along the spine of the aircraft so we had a conscious decision to eject, unlike some people that simply ejected at 700mph [1,125kp/h], breaking their arms or shoulders. JP pulled up, I think we may have been at something like 200ft, and we had slowed down, so we weren't at high speed.

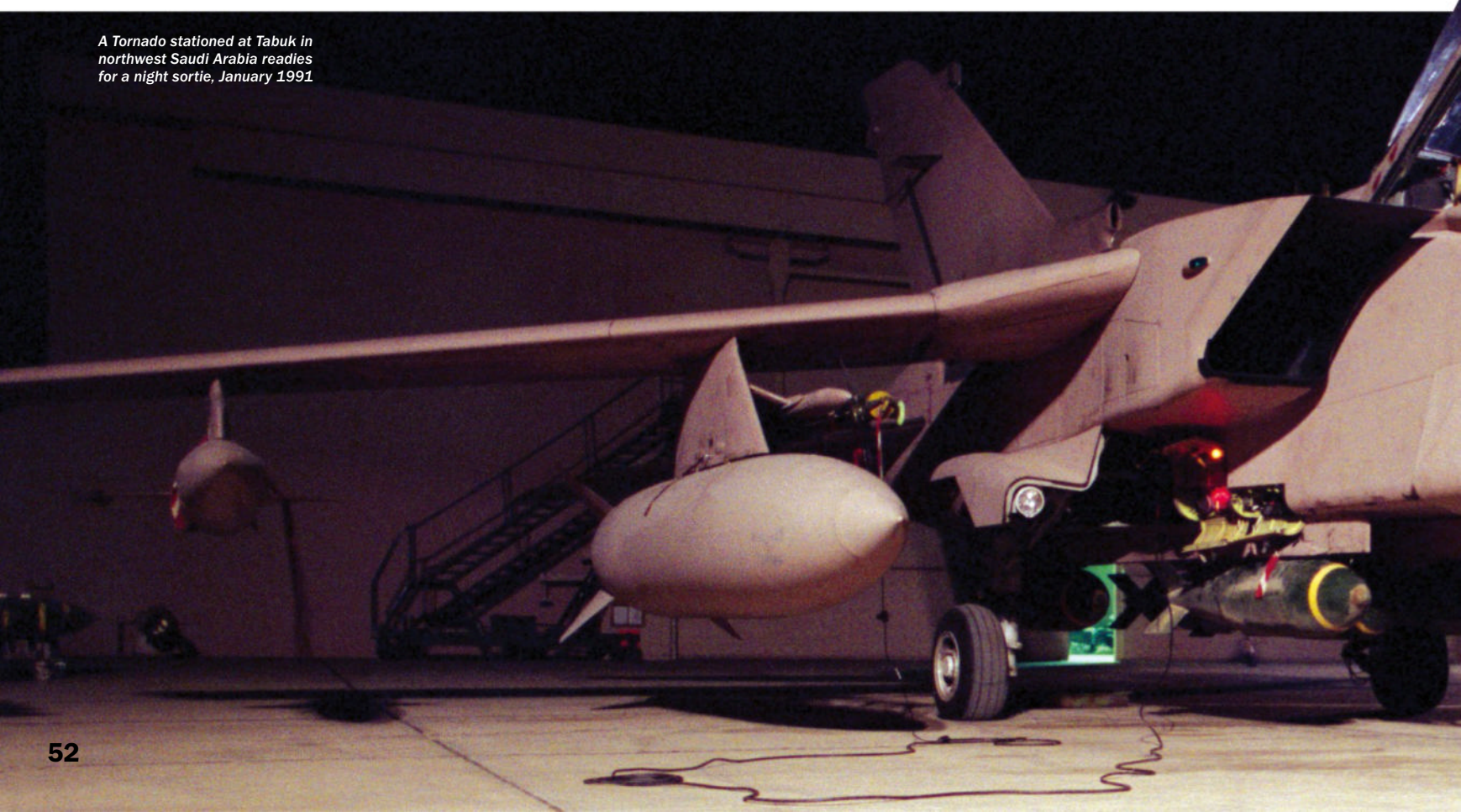
Pulling the ejection handle I remember a click. Then I could just see a jet of flame between my legs as the rockets ignited under the seat. You don't black out, but your eyes are obviously forced shut. There's a very quick tumbling sensation and then a 'snap' as the parachute opens. It's near instantaneous: a sensation of flame, a sensation of tumbling, a crack and then silence... then you're in a parachute. My first ever parachute jump... with the Iraqi desert beneath me.

### ***How do you reflect on the First Gulf War from an historian's perspective, in the context of the last three decades or so in the region?***

What we did in the First Gulf War was the right thing to do at the right time in those circumstances. Am I naive enough to say that if Kuwait exported bananas and didn't border the Saudi oil fields that we would have done it? Of course not, it was absolutely about regional stabilisation and it was at the time the right thing to do...

The premise was about liberating Kuwait... drawing a physical and metaphorical line in the sand to the likes of Iraq, Iran and others [saying]: "You cannot do this, without

*A Tornado stationed at Tabuk in northwest Saudi Arabia readies for a night sortie, January 1991*







Two Tornados in desert paint are prepared for a mission over Iraq

intervention, you cannot take over another country.” All of that was absolutely the right thing to do. What went wrong in the aftermath was that politicians saw the incredible power nobody had seen before. No politician had seen a cruise missile flying down [a] Baghdad street and destroying the Iraqi Ministry of Defense. No politician had seen General

Norman Schwarzkopf [saying]: “This is my counterpart’s headquarters in Baghdad. Here’s this air vent. Here’s a thousand-pound bomb.” Nobody had seen that. Nobody had seen how air power and a high-tech military, along with incredible surveillance

## “IT WAS STILL AN INCREDIBLY CAPABLE AIRCRAFT BUT BY MODERN STANDARDS IT WAS A SOLID BUS, BUT AN OLD BUS”

and intelligence, could really tear apart an opposing military and liberate a country. We didn’t understand... how impressive the combined military was. Politicians then thought “this is something we can use in the future” and that’s when things went wrong. So you then had the debacle of the immediate post-First Gulf War period of maybe two to four years with Saddam Hussein. We had no mandate to remove him from power.

Yes, he was an evil dictator and yes, his country was under dictatorship. So are many. As we proved 13 years later, trying to take over a country doesn’t work. So [we could have] left it at the success of the liberation of Kuwait – not trying to police the whole of Iraq from the air while protecting the Shia in the south and the Kurds in the north.

Then you had the 9/11 attacks, the ongoing claims about weapons of mass destruction, the invasion of Afghanistan – which conceivably could have turned out better if we’d have devoted some resources to rebuilding the country. We just thought as long as we defeated the regime it’ll be fine and it wasn’t, and we’ve proven that the whole thing was a debacle in Iraq. Terror from that region has been brought to our shores as well – there’s no doubt about that. So from a historical perspective, the aftermath of the conflict was handled really poorly.

Images: Alamy, Getty







LOBAU, VIENNA, AUSTRIA  
21-22 MAY 1809

## Great Battles



# ASPERN-ESSLING

With thousands of his men trapped on the Danube's south bank, Napoleon suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of his Austrian rivals

WORDS LOUIS HARDIMAN

## OPPOSING FORCES



### FRANCE

#### LEADERS

Napoleon I,  
André Masséna,  
Jean Lannes,  
Antoine Charles  
Louis de Lasalle,  
Jean-Baptiste Bessières

#### INFANTRY

68,000

#### CAVALRY

12,000

#### CANNON

154

VS



### AUSTRIA

#### LEADERS

Archduke Charles,  
Johann von Hiller,  
Heinrich von Bellegarde,  
Friedrich von  
Hohenzollern-Hechingen,  
Franz von Rosenberg,  
Johann I of Liechtenstein

#### INFANTRY

84,000

#### CAVALRY

14,000

#### CANNON

292

Fernand Cormon's rendering of Aspern-Essling, completed in 1893, shows French infantry bloodied and disordered



For three long years, Austria's best field commander, Archduke Charles, sat on the sidelines, humiliated by his defeat at the Battle of Caldiero (30 October 1805) and furious that he had been overlooked to lead his nation's army. Hundreds of miles away in northern Italy, he was powerless to stop the disaster at Austerlitz and could only watch as lands in Italy and Bavaria, alongside reparations payments of 40 million francs, were handed to the French in the Peace of Pressburg. The chance for revenge finally came during the Peninsula War in 1808.

France's invasion of Iberia failed to secure a quick victory and after his defeat at the Battle of Bailén (19 July 1808), Napoleon decided to deploy his Grande Armée. In a drawn-out attritional war against Spanish guerrillas, Napoleon's best troops and commanders became tied down in Iberia. Meanwhile, only the Army of Germany protected French interests in Central Europe. These men

were under the command of the capable administrator but poor field commander Louis-Alexandre Berthier and had a high number of conscripts and poor equipment.

Recalled to duty, Archduke Charles meticulously prepared the Austrian Army for war, emulating French systems to create a fearsome fighting force. Napoleon raced back to Paris, stopping only to gather young conscripts and troops from his ally Confederation of the Rhine to relieve Berthier. He was too slow to stop the main attack into Bavaria and only torrential rain prevented the Austrians from engaging the inadequate French forces in open battle.

When Napoleon finally arrived on 17 April, he dug Berthier out of trouble during the extraordinary Four-Day Campaign. First, Napoleon saw that Marshal Louis-Nicolas Davout's III Corps was dangerously isolated at Regensburg, with 80,000 Austrians quickly converging on it. Three columns attacked

Davout's force on the Teugen-Hausen ridgeline, with the first missing entirely, the second being held off by Davout's cavalry and the third locked in head-on battle against Davout's infantry.

Fighting a running battle along wooded hills, Davout's men could only escape once Napoleon's reinforcements arrived. Next, a manoeuvre to the east by Lannes and Marshal François-Joseph Lefebvre pushed what Napoleon wrongfully believed was the whole Austrian Army back to Landshut. Horrified that Archduke Charles wasn't at Landshut, Napoleon realised Davout was once again isolated in the north, with Austrian troops bearing down on him. Napoleon swung north with most of the Army of Germany to meet the Austrian IV Corps at the Battle of Eckmühl, winning their fourth victory in as many days.

The struggling Austrian forces retreated north, crossing the Danube at Regensburg. They left behind a small garrison to keep the





marauding Army of Germany on the south bank. Tales of these hopelessly outnumbered men, heroically throwing back endless waves of French attacks in frenzied street fighting for several hours, became legendary throughout the Austrian Army.

Only once the defending force had dwindled to 300 did the garrison finally surrender, by which time the main Austrian force was far out of Napoleon's reach. The French turned east towards Vienna and the race was on to reach the Austrian capital. They stopped only to detach the Bavarian Corps under the command of Lefebvre to put down a growing uprising in Tyrol.

Napoleon's men were a week quicker and Vienna fell on 13 May. Meanwhile, the Austrians waited patiently on the Danube's north bank, amassing over 100,000 troops on the Marchfeld, a sedimentary basin between the Eastern Alps and Western Carpathians. There, Rudolf I of Habsburg had gained victory in 1278, forging the power of the German Habsburgs with fire and sword. For Archduke Charles, the Marchfeld could again be the site of a critical victory.

### Crossing the Danube

Napoleon set his men on a collision course with the Austrians on the Marchfeld by planning a crossing of the Danube at Lobau Island, 5.6 miles (9km) southeast of Vienna. The island was desolate, with no shelter except a small hunting lodge and little food or firewood to be foraged. French engineers began building a series of floating bridges on 20 May from the south bank to Lobau.

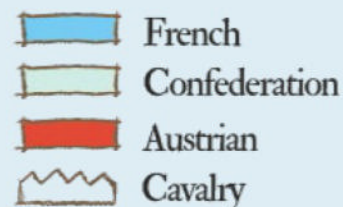
With backbreaking strain, they hauled pontoons into place, each 36ft long (11m) and weighing 4,000lb (1,814kg). Paradoxically, good weather made their task harder as snow melt from the Danube's 400 tributaries caused the river to become a fast-rising torrent. The Austrians took advantage, pushing barges, logs, hulks and an entire watermill covered in burning tar into the river, smashing the pontoons out of place, often for hours at a time. Marshal André Masséna IV Corps were the

Archduke Charles rides victorious on the Aspern-Essling battlefield



### 01 FLOATING BRIDGES CONSTRUCTED

French engineers arrive at the battlefield and construct fragile floating bridges across the flooding Danube to reach Lobau Island and establish a bridgehead on the north bank at Aspern and Essling. The engineers' ability to keep this crossing operational defines the battle's outcome.



### 02 INITIAL ASSAULT ON ASPERN

The Austrians attack Aspern, beginning the battle. They assault the town from three sides against a heroic defence led by General Molitor. Over the next four hours, control of Aspern changed sides approximately six times before falling into a stalemate with the arrival of French reinforcements.

### 03 ATTACK ON ESSLING BEGINS

Marshal Lannes leads a spirited defence of Essling. He pushes back three assaults, but the arrival of the Austrian 5th Column on Lannes' east flank as the first day closes leaves him in a perilous position.

### 04 DAVOUT'S CORPS STRANDED

French troops continue to cross the river on the night of 21/22 May. However, the bridge is severely damaged again and Davout's III Corps are stranded on the Danube's south bank, where they remain for the rest of the battle.

### 05 FIGHTING AT ASPERN RESTARTS

In the early hours of the second day, two Austrian columns strike at Aspern, taking the town and destroying buildings used as defensive positions. It takes a concerted counter-attack from Masséna for the French to recapture Aspern.

### 06 LANNES CHARGES THE AUSTRIAN CENTRE

Believing the Austrians have overcommitted at Aspern and Essling, Napoleon orders Lannes to lead an attack on the Austrian centre. Despite concentrated artillery fire, the French attack is successful and the Austrians are forced to use their Grenadier Reserve to stabilise the front.

## Battle of Aspern-Essling

May 21st, 1809







## 07 HEROIC DISOBEDIENCE AT ESSLING

Mouton is forced out of Essling and prepares to counter-attack. General Rapp disobeys orders to move to Aspern, reinforcing Mouton instead. Their combined five battalions advance and repel the Austrians.

## 08 FRENCH WITHDRAWAL

Without relief from Davout's Corps and cut off from Vienna, Napoleon orders his battered and exhausted men to fall back, supported by a rearguard action by Masséna. The Austrians are content to allow the French to cross back to Lobau. During the retreat, Marshal Lannes is struck by a cannonball, a mortal wound that devastates Napoleon.

**"SOLDIERS, WE SHALL FIGHT A BATTLE HERE TOMORROW. ON IT WILL DEPEND THE EXISTENCE OF THE AUSTRIAN MONARCHY, THE THRONE OF OUR GOOD KAISER FRANZ, THE FATE OF EACH ONE OF YOU. THE FATHERLAND, THE MONARCHY, YOUR PARENTS AND YOUR FRIENDS ALL HAVE THEIR EYES UPON YOU, SURE OF YOUR COURAGE AND YOUR STRENGTH!"**

Archduke Charles' order of the day, 20 May 1809



first to make a similarly treacherous crossing onto the Marchfeld by noon the following day and occupied Aspern and Essling. These settlements would become crucial bridgeheads to protect the crossing and the French centre, naturally defensible as they were surrounded by earth embankments with stone and brick-built houses.

As his men continued their crossing, Napoleon's scouts made a rare error when they roamed northwards and failed to detect five mighty Austrian columns advancing, hidden by a dust storm. Napoleon was unaware of his perilous situation and in a horseback conference with his commanders said they would only have to take on the Austrian rearguard. In fact, a massive attack was just hours away. By 1pm, the Austrians forced General Gabriel-Jean-Joseph Molitor out of his outposts north of the main French force and Napoleon could no longer deny that his position was fraught with danger. He would have to hold his ground against a superior Austrian Army without the thousands of men trapped on the Danube's south bank, including Davout's III Corps.

### Bayonets fixed on the streets

Fighting began in earnest at 2:45pm with a concerted Austrian attack on Aspern by General Johann von Hiller's First Column. In hand-to-hand combat, Molitor's men pushed back waves of Austrians, with the pressure growing further from 5pm as



**Above:** Austrian and French troops clash in Aspern in front of the burning church

General Heinrich von Bellegarde's Third Column arrived, now applying pressure on Aspern from three sides. Cavalry units under General Jacob-François Marulaz, General Jean-Louis-Brigitte d'Espagne and General Raymond-Gaspard de Saint-Sulpice charged the Austrian Third Column to draw attention away from Aspern. However, they failed to break through against robust resistance, as

the Austrians quickly bunched into their crude Battalion Mass formation, suited to their poorly trained conscripts.

Bellegarde's Second Column threw themselves at Aspern again at 6pm, with Archduke Charles riding among the front ranks. With cannonballs and musket shots flying, the town filled with choking smoke so thick the men could barely distinguish who they were crossing bayonets with. Both sides fell into a pattern of stalwart defence followed by a partial retreat and vigorous counter.

The town changed hands as many as six times. One Austrian account described the reason for the endlessly fluid fight for Aspern: "The steeple, lofty trees, the garrets and the cellars had to be taken before either side could call itself master of the place, and yet the possession was ever of short duration, for no sooner had we taken a street or a house than the French gained another."

The Aspern churchyard was the epicentre of the carnage, defended by men under Masséna's command. He led charges on foot to drive the Austrians from the churchyard five times in three hours.

Fighting in Aspern stained the streets red with the blood of fallen men and horses, with the French defenders suffering 50 per cent casualties in the maelstrom. However, it bought Napoleon's engineers the time required to repair the bridge and for divisions under generals Claude Juste Alexandre Legrand and Laurent de Gouvion Saint-Cyr to



**Napoleon walks past his wounded men on Lobau Island**



# DEATH OF LANNES

The passing of Napoleon's close friend left the emperor depressed and his army demoralised

Jean Lannes met Napoleon in 1796 while he was a chef de brigade. They won countless battles together, becoming close friends. Their bond was secured when Lannes stuck by Napoleon's side during the Coup of 18 Brumaire (1799), for which he was rewarded with the rank of marshal of the Empire. After being made duke of Montebello in 1808, Lannes was given command of Napoleon's advance guard during the War of the Fifth Coalition and was among the first across the Danube at Aspern-Essling.

Lannes was injured while leading rearguard action at the end of the second day. All his horses had been killed and only 300 grenadiers remained at his disposal. In a moment of relative calm, Lannes sat cross-legged on a wall, hands over his face as he mourned the loss of his General Pierre Charles Pouzet, who had

just been decapitated mid-conversation by artillery. The scream of a cannonball punctured this quiet moment of reflection, blasting through Lannes' knee.

The Marshal told those around him: "I am wounded; it's nothing much; give me your hand to help me up." Yet the wound was far worse than he realised and Lannes' officers had to help him to Surgeon General Dominique-Jean Larrey behind the lines, who quickly amputated the shattered leg. Soon after, Napoleon found his friend and wept as he embraced Lannes before leaving him to be transported to Vienna. Eight days later, Lannes finally succumbed to his wounds, dying with a high fever. While initially buried at the Hôtel des Invalides, his body was exhumed and reburied in the Panthéon in Paris' Latin Quarter after a grand ceremony.

## "WHAT A LOSS FOR FRANCE AND FOR ME"

Napoleon

Napoleon bids farewell  
to the mortally wounded  
Marshal Lannes







*Austrian grenadiers attempt to storm the fortified granary in Essling*

reinforce the defence of Aspern and bring the situation to a deadlock.

Meanwhile, the French at Essling were putting up spirited defences and counter-attacks led by Napoleon's close friend Marshal Lannes. The Austrian Fourth Column's first attack was quickly turned, although grapeshot struck the veteran General Espagne while he was charging down the retreat. After rescuing this hero of Caldiero and Heilsberg from the field, Lannes' men pushed back a further two Austrian assaults with relative ease. However, as the sun set behind the corpse-strewn and smoking town, the French would have looked at the following day with trepidation. The Austrian Fifth Column had finally arrived on the east flank of Essling.

### Night falls on the Marchfeld

By twilight, fighting across the Marchfeld ground to a halt. Men bivouacked wherever they could, surrounded by the bodies of their dead and dying comrades, barely more than musket range from the enemy. Reflecting on the day's action, Napoleon knew that he had gotten away with a grave mistake. His forces were vulnerable and isolated, backing onto the flooding Danube. Only the talent of his commanders and the discipline of his men had saved the Army of Germany from a crushing defeat, but fractures had started to emerge. An argument broke out between Lannes and Marshal Jean Baptiste Bessi res in the night, and Mass na intervened to stop the two men from drawing swords.

Napoleon had around 31,000 men on the northern side of the river. Knowing that the

**“WHEN THE CANNON BALLS FELL ON US, THEY CUT DOWN THREE MEN AT A TIME AND KNOCKED THE BEARSKIN CAPS TWENTY FEET IN THE AIR. ONE BALL STRUCK A WHOLE FILE AND KNOCKED THEM DOWN HEAD OVER HEELS ON TOP OF ME!”**

**Captain Jean-Roch Coignet**

number of Austrians would far surpass his overnight, he ordered further crossings to be made. The remaining II Corps under the command of Nicolas Oudinot and the Imperial Guard managed to cross while the rudimentary bridge was in operation. The French bridgehead was soon filled with the swarming masses of men who had just crossed and by 3am the Austrian cannons began to boom again, taking aim at this easy target.

The crossings had to stop in the early hours when the bridge ruptured once more. Davout's III Corps was still left on the wrong side of the Danube, although enough reinforcements had been brought forward for Lannes' men in Essling to fall into reserve.

### Second-day disaster

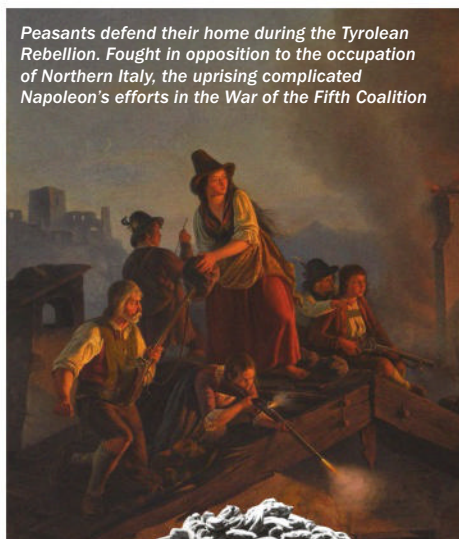
The Army of Germany's broken rest ended at 4am to the sound of the Austrians forming up. An hour later, two Austrian columns mounted an attack and pushed the French out of Aspern. Running from Aspern, the Frenchmen looked over their shoulders to see the church ablaze and the cemetery walls falling down – destroyed by the Austrians to ensure the French couldn't use them as defences again.

As the fighting ramped up in Aspern and Essling, the vast centre of the battlefield remained relatively undisturbed. Napoleon thought the Austrians had overcommitted in attempts to take the two flank settlements, turning the centre into a soft underbelly. This theory was buoyed by reports from captured Austrians that Landwehr manned the centre.

The Landwehr were self-trained reservists, no match for Napoleon's professional troops. He launched a II Corps attack at the centre, led by Lannes, but the charge was hampered somewhat by concentrated fire from well-positioned artillery. General Louis-Vincent-Joseph Saint Hilaire, a hero of Austerlitz and Jena, led the attack and had his left leg blown off. Still, Lannes showed great courage in leading his men onwards with 25 battalions and the Austrians were forced to retreat, while several artillery positions were overrun.

Archduke Charles saw his centre was at a point of collapse and sent in the Grenadier Reserve in a counter-attack that began to turn the French advance. Napoleon begrudgingly decided to pull his centre back to form a straight line between Aspern and Essling.





**Left:** The Löwe von Aspern (Lion of Aspern) stands in memorial to the Austrian soldiers and civilians who lost their lives at the Battle of Aspern-Essling

**Above:** The defeated Napoleon departs Lobau Island after the Battle of Aspern-Essling

Meanwhile, as noon came, the Danube rose higher still. Fresh ruptures constantly opened on the bridge as trees and boats flowed downstream into the pontoons. Davout's III Corps had no chance of crossing the gushing waters, 8ft (2.5m) higher and one-third wider than at the start of the battle. A new fear grew among the French command that Lobau would become fully submerged, trapping them on the north bank.

After the failure to break through the centre, fighting concentrated again at Essling. Baron Joseph von Dedovich's men had been thrown back from Essling seven times, but their eighth attack managed to force General Mouton's beleaguered three battalions of Young Guard fusiliers out of the settlement. Soon after, Mouton received orders to retake Essling. General Rapp, who had been commanded to bring two battalions of Young Guard towards Aspern, spotted Mouton preparing to launch a doomed attack.

Rapp rode over to Mouton and shared a plan to disobey Napoleon's orders by joining Mouton's assault on Essling. Going against Napoleon's wishes while in command of his treasured guard was unthinkable, but Mouton was eventually persuaded after Rapp reassured him: "If it comes off, we'll both get the credit; if it doesn't, I'll take the blame." The combined five battalions of Young Guard charged Essling one last time and quickly pushed the Austrians back out.

These final heroics in Essling earned Mouton and Rapp acclaim but were not enough to turn the tide of battle. Napoleon ordered a complete withdrawal back across

the Danube, supported by steadfast rearguard actions from Lannes and Masséna. The final Frenchmen wouldn't make it onto Lobau until the early hours, with Masséna's men taking responsibility for destroying the bridge behind them.

### A short-lived triumph

Until the makeshift bridge to the south bank of the Danube from Lobau was repaired, the French survivors had to wait on the island, tormented by the victorious Austrian soldiers singing *Te Deum* through the night. They survived on horse meat stew and water drawn from the Danube, tainted by the bodies of their comrades. The scale of the losses for both sides was horrifying.

The Austrians lost 24,000 to the French 22,000, with most of the corpses remaining unburied on the Marchfeld for weeks after. Scores of the French casualties were a result of the relentless Austrian artillery, which had fired 53,000 rounds to the French 24,300. Napoleon also lost two divisional generals (Saint-Hilaire and d'Espagne) and his close friend Lannes, which demoralised the whole army. Despite losing more men, the Austrians had claimed their first significant victory over the French in a decade and demonstrated their progress since Austerlitz. Moreover, the Austrians had shattered the myth of Napoleon's invincibility.

It was a further six weeks before Napoleon would cross the Danube again. He spent this time preparing defences for the bridges and bringing his strength up to 188,000 troops. The result was the Battle of Wagram.

Here, Aspern and Essling were again critical, positioned on the French's left flank, while much of the battlefield stretched eastward. It was taken from the French after extremely heavy Austrian shelling, while on the right flank, Davout's III Corps showed what could have been if they had made it across the river at Aspern-Essling. His advance rolled on steadily, an unstoppable force despite Archduke Charles placing more units in his path. With his army at the point of collapse, Archduke Charles held out for relief from his brother Archduke John that never came.

The War of the Fifth Coalition came to an end six days later at the Battle of Znaim, when the French caught up with Archduke Charles as he attempted to retreat north into Bohemia. In the following deal, the Habsburgs ceded territories in Croatia, Dalmatia and Slovenia, losing 3.5 million subjects and seeing their army reduced to 150,000.

## FURTHER READING

- Gilles Boué, *Essling: Napoleon's First Defeat?* (Histoire et Collections, 2008)
- Ian Castle, *Aspern & Wagram 1809: Mighty Clash of Empire* (Osprey Publishing, 1994)
- Todd Fisher, *The Napoleonic Wars: The Empires Fight Back 1808-1812* (Routledge, 2013)
- Patrick Rambaud, *The Battle* (Grove Press 2001)

Images: Alamy, Getty



WHAT IF...

# OPERATION VALKYRIE HAD ASSASSINATED HITLER?

Desperate members of his closest circle seize one last chance to eliminate the Nazi leader and change the course of history

## INTERVIEW WITH



### Roger Moorhouse

Roger is an award-winning historian and author of the critically acclaimed *Killing Hitler: The Third Reich and the Plots against the Führer*.

By July 1944 the Allied armies were back on European soil. As they began to push east towards Germany, the Nazi conspirators of Operation Valkyrie triggered their plan to blow up Adolf Hitler. The reclusive and paranoid dictator was encircled by a ring of steel and secrecy within his Wolf's Lair complex in Eastern Prussia, which only the most trusted could penetrate. Numerous attempts to kill him had failed, but on 20 July 1944 it was within his own stronghold that a bomb in a briefcase came tantalisingly close to wiping out perhaps the most notorious dictator of the 20th century and changing the course of the war.

#### **What made the conspirators of Operation Valkyrie believe they could succeed where previous attempts had failed?**

I don't think the Valkyrie conspirators were necessarily more confident that they would succeed. As much as anything, theirs was a desperate act. It was a throw of the dice and a symbolic gesture – as one of their number said at the time – “to show that another Germany existed”. What set them apart from the previous plots and attempts on Hitler's life was that they realised that it was no longer enough simply to assassinate their target. To achieve just this would leave a whole range of uncertainties and far too much to chance. They had to launch a coup to seize power as well. This made their task infinitely more complex and heightened the possibility of failure.

Of course, the great advantage that the Valkyrie conspirators had was that they had access to Hitler. By 1944, the German leader was a virtual recluse who was barely seen in public and had a highly refined and effective personal security regime. Anyone trying to target him would have to get through numerous levels of layered security checks, but a senior military officer coming to a briefing could avoid all that. What they were unable to plan for was the intervention of sheer chance. The briefcase containing the bomb was moved from its spot right next to Hitler, where it would've almost guaranteed his death, when Colonel Heinz Brandt inadvertently pushed it further under the table. He was just making room for himself,

but in so doing the thick oak table leg shielded Hitler from the explosion. He escaped with just shredded trousers and a perforated eardrum. Those who'd plotted the bombing and attempted coup would eventually not be so fortunate.

#### **Was there enough popular support, military strength and leadership to pull off a coup after Hitler's death? Would it have replaced bad with bad?**

The civilian side of the plot was reasonably numerous and wide-ranging, but it is highly dubious that they could have taken power on 20 July, let alone held on to it. For one thing, the extent of popular support [for an assassination and coup] is rather questionable. Of course, there were many ordinary Germans who were tired of the war by July 1944, and some of them might have felt freed from their loyalty to the regime by the death of Hitler, but such was the power of Nazi propaganda and control that I doubt it would have been enough to sustain the coup.

In addition, the coup plotters lacked the determination and grit to do what was necessary. Instead of executing their senior opponents, it seems they preferred to effectively inherit power by assassination. Anyone of senior rank in the public eye who was

**Below: This reconstruction shows Hitler's position and that of the briefcase containing the bomb**





WHAT IF... OPERATION VALKYRIE HAD ASSASSINATED HITLER?



Images © Alamy, Getty



## THE PAST

1939

### IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

Assassination attempts on the German dictator were nothing new and there had been numerous other failed plots to dispose of him, such as in 1939 in a beer hall in

Munich. A timebomb was planted, and the explosion killed others but not Hitler because he had already left the event. Other attempts over years, and their subsequent failures, only served to increase a sense of invincibility, both in Hitler's own eyes and in those of the millions who looked to him for leadership, inspiration and strength.

JUNE 1944

### ALLIES BACK IN EUROPE

With Operation Overlord on 6 June 1944 – D-Day – the tide of the war changed dramatically in favour of the Allies. It became increasingly clear that it was not a case of 'if' the Germans would lose the war, but 'when'. Becoming ever more withdrawn within a much-reduced inner circle of only his most trusted military advisors, a deluded Hitler continued to plan his strategy to repel the advancing Allies. But for many high-ranking German soldiers and officials, waiting for the Allies to rid them of Hitler was unthinkable – they had to grasp the moment for themselves.

JULY 1944

### A PLAN IN TATTERS

Being so close to the Führer was all in a day's work for Colonel Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg. That was the easy part. But for all the planning it was to be a stroke of fate that left the plot in ruins when the briefcase bomb under the table was moved at the last moment. As he fled the scene von Stauffenberg made the fatal error of assuming Hitler was dead. Mixed messages flew around the airwaves, but it was not so. They had failed. Hitler had survived with only minor injuries and torn trousers. His retribution was swift, with the conspirators and thousands of other suspects rounded up and executed.

not eliminated would only be a rallying point for further unrest and resistance to change. So in reality their actions did not match the enormity of the task in hand. They had recognised the need to not only assassinate Hitler but also launch a coup to take control, but perhaps naively they convinced themselves that the demise of Hitler would somehow trigger a popular response that would take on its own momentum to meet their objectives. Had they been more brutal they might have had a better chance of success.

### Is it possible there would have been a civil war in Germany?

Civil war was always a possibility, but it would have required some sort of popular uprising against Nazi rule. In order to achieve this, the plotters would've had to overcome some overwhelming challenges: the sheer weight of the years that the Nazi regime had been in power, the charismatic hold of Hitler himself that was still at the centre of the message (even though by this time he was rarely seen in public), and the reach and depth of the Nazi information and propaganda machine. And it could have led to a more fractured country with various and complex factions looking for an opportunity to gain from the unrest and uncertainty. As it was, the Valkyrie plotters needed to dupe most of the army units operating in their name into believing that they were acting in support of the Nazi regime, but that ruse would not have worked for more than a few hours. For any sort of prolonged confrontation to be won, the plotters would have needed a large slice of popular support.

### Under what terms would the new German leadership have surrendered to the Allies? Or would they have fought on, and with what possible outcome?

Had they managed to secure control of the levers of power, the coup plotters wanted to agree terms with the Western Powers while fighting on against the Soviets. But for any of that to be feasible, any terms had to be realistic, achievable and not imbalanced in such a way that Germany was merely just trying to soften the blow of defeat. It was from the east that the Germans feared for their future more than anything, from a Soviet Union that would inflict its revenge for what it had suffered at the hands of Nazi Germany. This was perhaps an understandable ambition from a German conservative perspective, but it flew in the face of the many expressions of Allied unity – not least the Casablanca Declaration of 1943, which demanded the unconditional surrender of Axis forces. In such circumstances, I think it's doubtful that any separate peace with the Allies would have been possible.

### As the plot was before the 1945 Yalta Conference, how could its success have changed the Western Allies' ambitions in relation to Germany and Russia? How would the map of Europe have been affected? And what about Italy?

It is tempting to imagine that a seizure of power by the coup plotters in July 1944 could have caused profound change to the circumstances that we know played out.

Below: Nazi officials examine the aftermath of the explosion. Four people were killed but Hitler survived



Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg was close to Adolf Hitler and planted the bomb



**Right: Field Marshal Erwin von Witzleben was executed along with other high-ranking conspirators**



**WHAT IF...  
ALTERNATIVE  
HISTORY: WWII  
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However, any significant change would have been dependent on the new German regime being able to persuade the Western Powers to effectively abandon their Soviet ally and sign up to a separate peace. It would also have relied heavily on how the new leaders of Germany were dealing with any possible domestic unrest caused by the coup. How would any unrest impact their ability to be effective partners, politically and militarily, in a rapidly conceived alliance against the Soviets? The Allies would also have to be convinced that the new leadership stood as one, with a single vision and determination which went beyond just a Germany without Hitler, or even Nazis. The idea of substantial change to the geo-political landscape post-coup, therefore, is a chimera, an unrealistic vision. The constellation of power ranged against Germany by 1944 was too great to effectively dismantle.

**What would the impact on the war in the Far East have been and why?**

There is a possibility that the war in the Far East might have seen some impact. Obviously the Allied forces were fighting on a

separate front in a completely different part of the world, and with that came enormous logistical and tactical issues which extra forces could have helped to alleviate even a little. With a separate peace in Europe, it would theoretically have been possible for the United States to transfer more of its forces to the Pacific Theatre, thereby bringing more pressure to bear on the Japanese. This in turn may have had some impact on how and when the Allies would and could have defeated Japan. Given enough time and resources it may have considered a full invasion of the Japanese mainland itself. One might speculate that a swifter Japanese collapse could have meant that deployment of the atomic bomb could have been avoided, and as such the actual use of such a weapon in combat would have remained very much on the drawing board as a theoretical and untried tactic.

However, given that any transfer of American troops would have likely taken months to put into effect, one must wonder whether the effect of such a shift might actually have been minimal.

# THE POSSIBILITY

**1944**

## FROM FOE TO FRIEND

Had the plot succeeded, it's possible (however remote) that the Germans may have surrendered and struck a deal with the Western Allies. From bitter experience the Germans knew just what kind of adversary the Russians could be, and they knew the terrible suffering inflicted by the Nazis would never be forgiven. If the Germans could somehow play on any doubts the West had about their Russian partners – and what they intended to gain from the war – then the Western Allies might, just might, have been tempted to ally with Germany to keep the Russians out of Europe.



**1945 – PRESENT**

## NOT-SO-COLD WAR

If the West had helped Germany escape the clutches of the Russian advance, perhaps persuaded by the inevitable division of territories and natural resources held by the Nazis around the world, then the present-day map of Europe may have looked very different. The possibilities seem endless: no Warsaw Pact countries, no Iron Curtain, no divided Germany and no Berlin Wall. The influence of the Soviet Union would be substantially diminished in the post-war era and the rising star of the United States would shine even more brightly.

**1945**

## A DIFFERENT KIND OF SURRENDER

If the conflict in Europe had ended more quickly there could have been a dramatic impact on the war against Japan. In time, more troops, ships and armour could have been redeployed to the Far East to the point which, perhaps, an invasion of Japan itself would've been a distinct possibility. There would have been a much higher cost to pay in casualties on both sides, but if Japan had been overwhelmed by conventional forces then maybe the use of the atom bomb wouldn't have been necessary to bring about its surrender.





# MARGARET OF ANJOU

# WARLADY

**How the daughter of an impoverished duke of France became one of the most controversial queens in English history**

WORDS JESSICA LEGGETT

**W**hen Margaret of Anjou's marriage to King Henry VI of England was arranged in 1445 in the name of peace, no one could have foreseen that it would contribute to the bloody civil war that would engulf England just ten years later.

Born in 1430, Margaret was the bright and educated daughter of René, Duke of Anjou, and Isabella, Duchess of Lorraine. Through her paternal aunt, Marie of Anjou, she was also the niece of the king of France, Charles VII.

Since the 14th century, the Hundred Years' War had raged on between France and England over the succession to the French throne. Margaret and Henry's marriage provided a much-needed break for the two countries, and the couple were married at Titchfield Abbey in Hampshire. Just 15, the new queen was crowned at Westminster Abbey less than a month later.

The two were completely different. Henry was a weak king who had ruled England since he was just a few months old, albeit with a regency until he was 16. Political factions dominated his court, which he failed to control, and his ability to rule was hampered by frequent periods of mental instability. Margaret, on the other hand, was a proud, strong and ambitious woman.

From the beginning, it was obvious that the marriage was not popular among the English. After all, they had spent the past century in and out of conflict with France, and now they had to accept a French woman as their queen. Margaret was in a difficult position, trying to support her vulnerable husband in a country where she was unwelcome.

The royal marriage was not that advantageous for Henry considering Margaret's father had little money and he didn't provide a dowry. But Henry urgently needed a male heir to secure the Lancastrian dynasty, and it was hoped that Margaret would solve this. The problem was the king

showed little interest in sexual relations at all. He was a shy, timid and religious man, hardly the ingredients needed for a passionate relationship with his wife.

The queen had her work cut out, but after eight childless years she finally succeeded when she gave birth to a boy, Edward, Prince of Wales, in October 1453. It should have been a time of joy and celebration. Instead, just two months prior the king had suffered a complete mental breakdown. Margaret had to protect the Lancastrian dynasty in the face of the power struggle that ensued.

The queen hoped to secure the regency for her son to protect him as a lioness would protect her cubs – Margaret needed to fight for power. Of course, a woman acting as a regent was not an unusual concept to Margaret; her mother had done so on behalf of her father a decade earlier. But she was no longer in France. England was far less welcoming to the idea of female rule, and the queen's quest to secure the regency failed. Although frustrated, Margaret would not let this stop her from protecting her son.

Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, was appointed as regent for Henry during his illness. Before the birth of Prince Edward, York had the strongest claim to the English throne after the king. Margaret's relationship with York was poor, particularly as she was allies with his rival Edward Beaufort, Duke of Somerset. In fact, there were those at court who even suspected that Margaret and Somerset were lovers and that he was the prince's father.

This strained relationship deteriorated further as Margaret feared York would depose her husband and seize the crown for himself – suspicions that worsened when York had Somerset imprisoned in the Tower of London. Luckily, for both Margaret and Somerset, the king regained his senses towards the end of 1454. Using her influence over her husband, Margaret convinced him to remove York from court, while Somerset was released.





The marriage of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou as depicted in the Talbot Shrewsbury Books



Margaret became the de facto leader of the Lancastrians on behalf of her husband, determined to exclude the Yorkists from power. Her actions angered the Duke of York, and in May 1455 he gathered his forces from the north and began to make his way south to confront the Lancastrians. York claimed that he was acting to protect the king, but in reality his actions marked the start of an all-out war.

The First Battle of St Albans on the 22 May was a complete disaster for Margaret. The Lancastrians were heavily defeated, Somerset was killed in the chaos and the king brought under Yorkist control. The Duke of York was named Lord Protector for the Realm while the queen's position was weakened. On the surface an uneasy peace had been reached, but Margaret cunningly worked behind the scenes to stir up Lancastrian support against her sworn enemy.

By 1459, hostilities between the two factions broke out again. Victory swayed between the Lancastrians and the Yorkists, as the former won at the Battle of Ludford towards the end of the year, only to lose at the Battle of Northampton in 1460. The loss at Northampton was a nightmare for the queen as King Henry was captured. It was at this point that Margaret's greatest fear was realised, as Henry was forced to agree to the Act of Accord, a parliamentary act that recognised York and his descendants as Henry's heirs, thereby disinheriting Prince Edward.

**"THE FIRST BATTLE OF ST ALBANS WAS A DISASTER FOR MARGARET. THE LANCASTRIANS WERE DEFEATED, SOMERSET WAS KILLED AND THE KING BROUGHT UNDER YORKIST CONTROL"**



**Above:** King Henry (seated) with the dukes of York (left) and Somerset arguing

Incensed, Margaret fled to Wales and later Scotland with her son to garner support. While she remained there the Lancastrians secured a much-needed victory at the Battle of Wakefield in December, in which York and many of his leaders were killed. However, the Yorkist threat was not over as York's son Edward, Earl of March, and his nephew, the Earl of Warwick, assumed leadership of the faction.

Two months later, in February 1461, the two sides met once again at the Second Battle of St Albans as the Lancastrians marched towards London. Margaret was present during the battle and oversaw the defeat of the Yorkists, regaining her husband in the process. They wanted to return to the capital, but the queen hadn't anticipated that the Londoners would refuse her entry thanks to the Lancastrian reputation for violence and ransacking. With Edward and Warwick moving south with their armies, Margaret was forced to withdraw north, where the two sides met again at the Battle of Towton in March.

The battle was a complete fiasco for the queen. The Lancastrian forces were crushed, and Margaret fled into exile with the king and their son. Edward, Earl of March,

**Below:** The marriage between Margaret and Henry was supposed to provide England with peace

**Below, left:** A miniature depiction of the Battle of Tewkesbury, as illustrated in the Ghent Manuscript







# MARGARET OF ANJOU'S BLACK LEGEND?

A smear campaign tarnishes the queen's reputation to this day

In one of her most iconic portrayals, Margaret is referred to as a "foul wrinkled witch" in Shakespeare's play *Richard III*. Such ridiculing remarks were commonplace for centuries – claiming or calling a woman a witch was one of the best ways to disparage her, particularly if she was in a position of influence. Yet, until she perceived that her husband and son were under threat from the Duke of York, Margaret showed little political ambition. Having grown up around powerful, educated women in France like her mother, Margaret knew that royal authority had to be fought for.



Margaret proved herself to be a formidable queen. Faced with a completely incapable husband and the political intrigue of the English court, she was left with no choice but to lead the Lancastrian cause herself. But despite this, Margaret's behaviour was deemed unnatural for a woman of her time.

As a result of this, she has been condemned as a villainous female who did not know her rightful place and dominated her husband, an opinion that is still popular today. Unfortunately, this is partly because Margaret was on the losing side in the Wars of the Roses – and history is always written by the winners.

was proclaimed king as Edward IV, and he sent Warwick to squash the remaining Lancastrian rebels in the north. Over the next few years Margaret continued to encourage Lancastrian rebellions but, despite efforts to hide him, her husband was recaptured in 1465. Left with little choice, Margaret sought refuge with her son in France, a nation ruled by her cousin King Louis XI. The deposed queen had to regroup now that the throne had been lost, and she attempted to drum up support for her cause.

After years waiting in the shadows, fate – or even sheer luck – decided to give Margaret an opportunity that she

couldn't have foreseen. In 1470, Warwick had fled to France after falling out with King Edward over the latter's controversial marriage to Elizabeth Woodville and the rise of her family at court. After leading a failed rebellion against his former friend, Warwick, also known as 'the kingmaker' was plotting his revenge. Realising that Margaret would be a powerful ally, he reached out to her via King Louis.

Margaret was sceptical about partnering with a man whom she would have gladly seen dead. However, she also knew he was her best shot at deposing Edward: after all, the earl was not known as the kingmaker for no reason. He promised to restore her husband to the throne, but Margaret did not let her guard down. She insisted that Warwick prove his loyalty by heading to England first, without her, to restore her husband. If he succeeded, she would follow him with her army.

A dangerous alliance was formed, and as further proof of Warwick's sincerity his daughter Anne was betrothed to Prince Edward. Warwick landed in England in September and his rebellion quickly gained support. The king, unprepared for such an attack, was forced to flee the country, and by October the kingmaker had restored Henry to the throne. Satisfied that Warwick had fulfilled his duty, Margaret oversaw the marriage between Anne and Edward that December and readied her troops to return to England.

However, bad weather prevented the queen crossing the Channel. By the time she arrived in England the tide had changed. Edward had returned along with his armies, facing Warwick at the Battle of Barnet on 14 April 1471. Warwick was killed just as Margaret set foot on English soil. The queen lost her ally and King Henry was recaptured, yet Margaret refused to back down.

Taking control of the Lancastrian army, she faced the Yorkists at the Battle of Tewkesbury on 4 May 1471. Despite her efforts, Margaret's forces were defeated and her reason for fighting on disappeared as her beloved son was killed. Heartbroken, Margaret was taken captive and imprisoned in the Tower of London along with her husband. Less than two weeks later Henry died, most likely assassinated on Edward's orders.

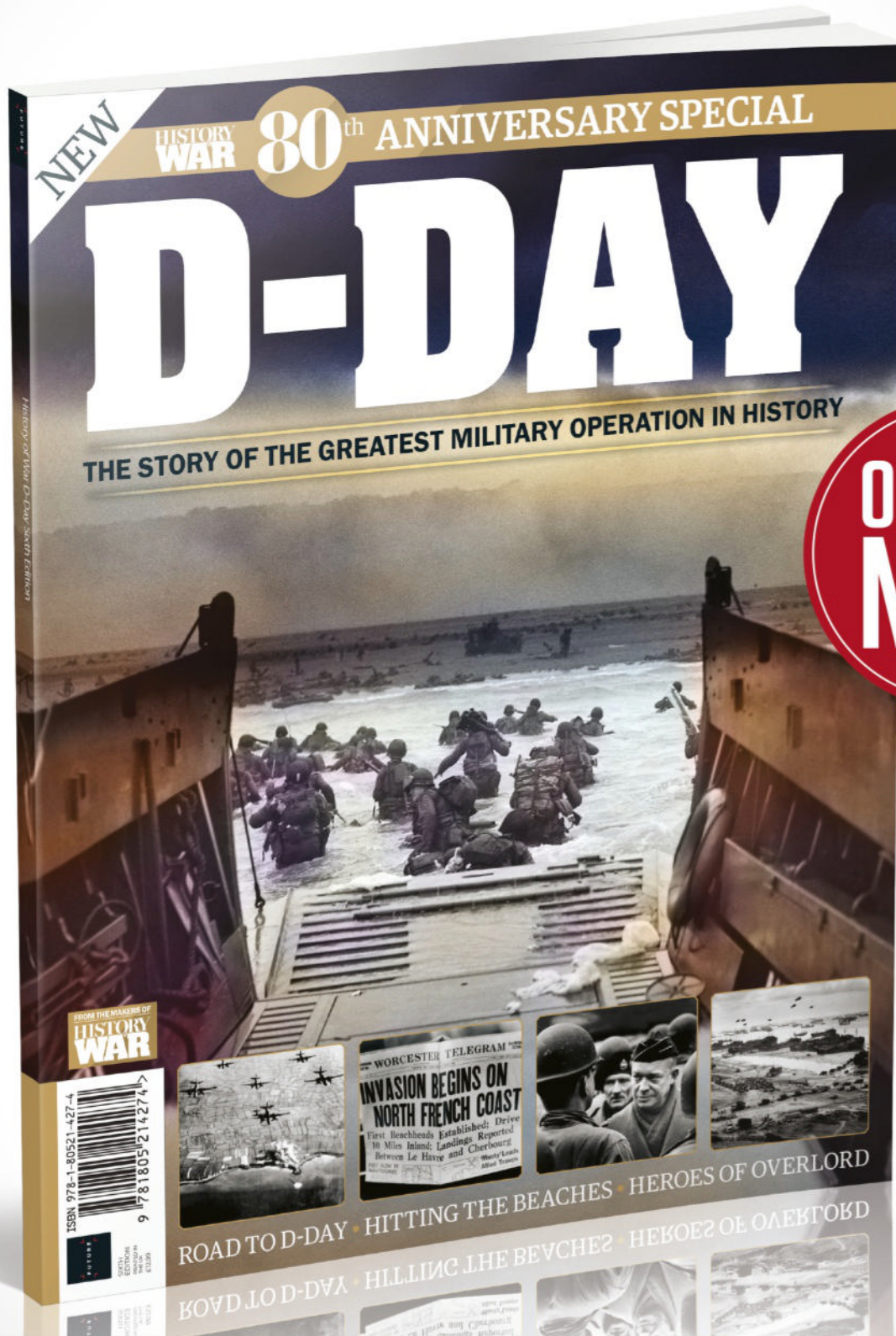
In 1475, King Louis paid a ransom for Margaret, who was forced to renounce her claims to the English throne as well as the French inheritance of her parents. Margaret spent the rest of her days impoverished, living on a pension provided by Louis until she died in 1482. While she ultimately failed to retain the throne for the Lancastrians, Margaret proved a defiant and powerful woman, just as capable of warmongering as the men around her.





# HOW 'FORTRESS EUROPE' FELL AND THE WAR WAS WON

History of War: D-Day discovers how brave Allied soldiers landed on the shores of Northern France, and fought a formidable nemesis, poor weather, and the forces of nature to succeed in the most definitive battle of World War II.



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# HOME FRONT

## 74 TIGER-SPOTTING IN FRANCE

Eighty years ago this month the Tiger II – one of Germany's over-engineered heavy tanks – was deployed, and destroyed



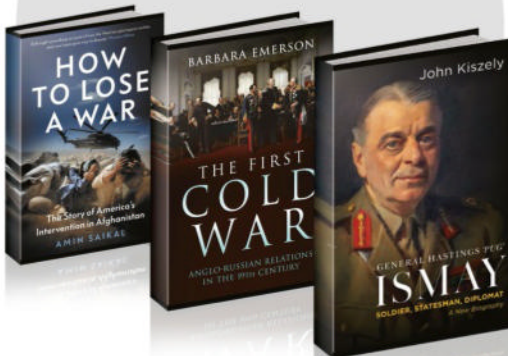
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# MUSEUMS & EVENTS

A brand-new Polish bomber heritage centre, more chances to see National Army Museum's temporary exhibition and the UK's best winter history festival

## Polish bomber squadrons heritage centre opens

**The culmination of 21 years of research, this new facility unearths the story of Poland's bomber squadrons that flew alongside the RAF during the Second World War**

In 2003, Geoff Burton, founder of RAF Ingham Heritage Centre, moved to Fillingham and soon became immersed in the wartime history of this small village perched on the Lincoln Cliff, a sandstone escarpment that runs north to south through Lincolnshire. The RAF positioned airfields along the Cliff, benefiting from the natural updraft. One such airfield was RAF Ingham, which fell out of use in 1946 and soon became swallowed up by agriculture.

Burton dedicated himself to discovering the history of this airfield, which had hosted two Polish squadrons (No 300 and 305) and the RAF's No 199. After seven years of research, he hosted a small display of his findings in 2010, which sparked the creation of what became the RAF Ingham Heritage Centre.

As Burton's group continued to grow, they discovered the lack of any heritage centres dedicated to the contribution of Polish bomber squadrons, so they set about

creating a museum on the site of RAF Ingham. His team secured a lease for the site in 2012 and began construction, raising £500,000 over the past 12 years. Featuring original research based on testimonies given by former Polish airmen, the heritage centre finally opened in April 2024. "We've had some lovely comments from everybody saying [the heritage centre] is incredible, inspirational and very moving," Burton tells *History of War*.

Visitors can discover the full wartime history of the squadrons of RAF Ingham. The display begins with the Soviet and Nazi invasion of Poland and traces the airmen's passage through France to eventually reach Lincolnshire, from which they launched their sorties. This narrative is told via the deeply personal stories shared by members of the three Polish squadrons.

Alongside images and testimonies, RAF Ingham Heritage Centre also hosts a range of artefacts and exhibits. The standout is a 1:1

scale model of a Lancaster cockpit, allowing visitors to get a sense of what it would have been like to be a Polish pilot flying towards a target in the war's most iconic heavy bomber.

Still in its early stages, there is plenty more to come from RAF Ingham Heritage Centre. Burton says: "We've seen with so many museums that you go back after three years and nothing has changed; it's very static. So we've set out from the start that with each new season, there will always be new [artefacts and exhibits] on display and new personal stories to tell."

RAF Ingham is open on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10am to 3pm and charges a small entrance fee. Please book online to secure concessions tickets.

**For more information visit**  
[www.rafindham.co.uk](http://www.rafindham.co.uk)



**Left:** The heritage centre hosts a wealth of information on the Polish No 301 and No 300 squadrons

**Right:** This 1:1 scale model of a Lancaster cockpit helps visitors to get closer to the Polish bomber crews' experience flying into battle

**Below, right:** Alongside fascinating information, artefacts used at RAF Ingham are also on display



**Above:** The heritage centre has compiled the personal stories of the Lancaster crew members and their wartime experiences



# Shakespeare at War extended

**The National Army Museum's exhibition on conflict in the Bard's writing will now run until September 2024**

The temporary exhibition *Shakespeare at War* explores how his work continues to inform our perceptions of war and the army. The playwright's depictions of soldiers and battlefields have inspired soldiers and civilians for hundreds of years.

The exhibition begins with Shakespeare's position as a Royalist icon during the English Civil War. It then jumps forward to the First World War, where both Germany and Britain claimed Shakespeare. He continued to be important in Germany during the Weimar Republic, with Germans referring to him as 'unser Shakespeare' ('our Shakespeare'). Finally, the exhibition explores the continuing significance of the playwright, including reproductions of his plays inspired by wars in the Middle East and Rishi Sunak's use of a Shakespeare quote in a handwritten note at Hiroshima.

A fantastic range of artefacts has been curated for this exhibition based on new research from the edited collection *Shakespeare at War: A Material History* by Dr Amy Lidster (University of Oxford) and Professor Sonia Massai (King's College London). Lidster says: "Shakespeare has been used to motivate troops, to reflect on the suffering of war, to influence political opinion, and to provoke through satire and propaganda. It has been thrilling to work with the National Army Museum and to find these stories richly embedded within their collection".

While initially planned to conclude in April, the exhibition has now been extended to 1 September 2024, so you still have an opportunity to view this fascinating exhibition.

For more information visit: [www.nam.ac.uk](http://www.nam.ac.uk)

Right: This 1880 painting is titled 'What you cannot, as you would achieve, you must perform accomplish as you may', from Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*



A guest at Shakespeare and War views the exhibits

© National Army Museum

## IWM History Festival

**Delve into the Battle of Britain and more at Imperial War Museum's annual extravaganza**

The IWM History Festival is once again coming to Duxford this winter, giving you the chance to get up close to IWM Duxford's exhibits and meet fascinating historians and authors. There will be 15 author talks and book signings, 12 'behind the ropes' tours, eight chances to view collections up close, and more.

In a weekend packed with highlights, the James Holland and AirSpace personal tour stands out. This exclusive after-hours experience takes you through the AirSpace Hanger with Holland as he speaks on his favourite aircraft, sharing their unique stories of innovation and heroism. Holland will also be speaking

about his upcoming book *Cassino '44*, which will be published just before the festival.

The festival is also packed with author talks and book signings. On Saturday, Helen Fry's talk about her latest book *Women in Intelligence* is sure to be popular. Her work breaks new ground on the pivotal role of female intelligence operatives during the two world wars. One exciting appearance on Sunday is Clare Mulley. Talking about her book *Agent Zo*, Mulley will discuss Elzbieta Zawacka, a fearless and remarkable yet forgotten resistance fighter. Visitors are welcome to bring your own copies to book signings, but copies will also be available from the IWM bookshop.

IWM History Festival will run from 23 to 24 November. Both Saturday and Sunday tickets at the festival are available online and include access to five ticketed sessions. Demand for these sessions is high, so make sure to book your place soon. Drop-in sessions and book signings do not need to be booked in advance.



Attendees meet Clare Mulley at a signing for her award-winning book *The Women Who Flew for Hitler*



Festival guests walk among historic aircraft in a Duxford hangar

For more information visit: [iwm.org.uk](http://iwm.org.uk)

Images: © IWM




**WWII THIS MONTH...**

# JULY 1944

To commemorate 80 years since the Second World War, History of War will be taking a look at some of the key events taking place during each month of the conflict



## TIGER SPOTTED

July 1944 saw the deployment of multiple innovative pieces of advanced weaponry for the first time on both sides. The primary Axis debutante was the heavy Tiger II tank, combining the Tiger I's thick armour with the sloped plating of the Panther medium tank. A less successful development was the Messerschmitt Me 163 Komet, the first and last rocket-powered fighter. It was one of Hitler's Wunderwaffe, a programme of innovative weapons he hoped would turn the tide of battle. Meanwhile, the RAF introduced the Gloster Meteor, the Allies' only operational jet aircraft of the war. RAF Command wanted this aircraft to replace the de Havilland Mosquito as its primary night fighter.



A destroyed Tiger II tank lies among the ruins of Argentan, Normandy





Winston Churchill visits the ruins of Caen with Generals Miles Dempsey and Bernard Montgomery

## OPERATION CHARNWOOD

A month after D-Day, Anglo-Canadian forces launched an offensive aimed at capturing Caen, nine miles (15km) from the Normandy coast. The attack was preceded by the Allies' controversial bombing raid, which obliterated the Old City of Caen. As the sun rose over the rubble on 8 July, the Allies attacked with three infantry divisions and three armoured brigades, pushing the Wehrmacht from the outskirts and into the city. On 9 July, Anglo-Canadian forces fought their way into Caen and linked up in the town centre. With German reserves falling back to form an impassable defence on the bridges across the Orne, Operation Charnwood was halted.

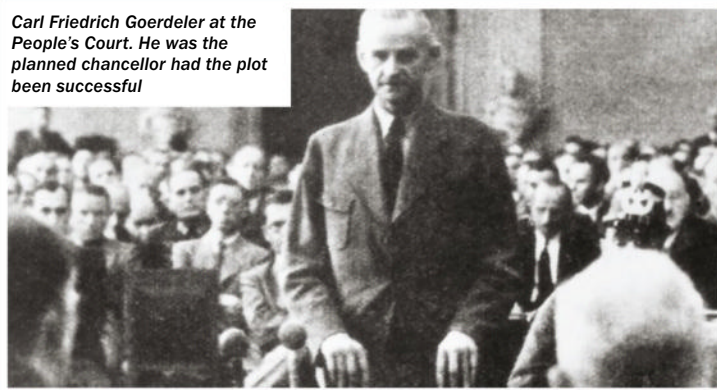


## 20 JULY PLOT

On 20 July a coup d'état, led primarily by Wehrmacht officers, attempted to topple the Nazi regime. At the core of the plot was an assassination attempt against Hitler at his Eastern Front headquarters. During a routine military briefing with senior officers, a

hidden bomb was detonated. Though four were killed in the blast, Hitler survived with minor injuries. In the aftermath of the plot, 7,000 suspects were arrested and 4,980 executed. Claus von Stauffenberg the officer responsible for planting the bomb concealed in a suitcase, was shot by a firing squad on 21 July.

Carl Friedrich Goerdeler at the People's Court. He was the planned chancellor had the plot been successful



## BATTLE OF NOEMFOOR

During their advance towards the Philippines, Allied forces assaulted Japanese bases on Noemfoor Island, Dutch New Guinea, on 2 July 1944. After opting to allow the US troops to come ashore unopposed, the Japanese withdrew to inland defensive positions where they had prepared wire entanglements, trenches and dugouts. However, effective Allied bombardment stunned the Japanese and the US declared the island secure on 7 July. The US established a cordon around the island, but a small force led by Japanese commander Suesada Shimizu managed to slip through.

American paratroopers launch their assault on the Japanese-held Noemfoor Island, Indonesia



## FIRST CONCENTRATION CAMP LIBERATED

On the night of 22-23 July, Red Army soldiers entered Majdanek, the first time a Nazi camp had been liberated. Soviet and Polish researchers began to investigate the camp soon after and their findings continue to shape our understanding of the Holocaust. The Polish People's Army's Film Crew was also invited into the camp, filming their documentary *Majdanek: The Cemetery of Europe*, exposing in detail the horrors of the Nazis' policy of mass murder for the first time.



Zyklon B pellets found after the liberation of Majdanek



# REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books and films

## BEFORE DAWN

THIS JOURNEY INTO A WESTERN FRONT HELLSCAPE IS HEART-WRENCHING AND AUTHENTIC, BUT FAILS TO KEEP PACE WITH ITS CONTEMPORARIES

**Director:** Jordon Prince-Wright **Production company:** Kaleidoscope Entertainment **Starring:** Levi Miller, Travis Jeffery, Ed Oxenbould

**Released:** Out now in cinemas. Available on streaming, Blu-ray and DVD from 2 September

Jim Collins (Levi Miller) is a young Australian persuaded to fight in the Great War by friends working with him on his family's sheep station. He is motivated by boredom in the suffocatingly small world of the Australian outback rather than a call of duty to Australia or the empire.

Following typical fish-out-of-water war movie narrative, the naive young man is soon confronted by the mud, blood and horror of the Western Front. The men Collins has around him become brothers, but are slowly whittled away, falling to bullets, shells and shrapnel. He

accumulates survivor's guilt along the way, questioning whether he could have saved his friends, if only he'd fought harder.

*Before Dawn* sticks by Collins' side for over two years in France and gives a unique perspective on the intense interpersonal relationships, far beyond mere camaraderie, forged in the trenches. Writer-director Jordan Prince-Wright brings to life the story of the real Jim Collins, using Great War diaries to enhance the narrative's historical authenticity. His young characters are highly relatable and richly textured, and we have plenty of time to get to know his protagonist. It is impossible not to



**“TO THOSE THAT DIDN'T MAKE IT AND THOSE THAT DID”**





feel empathy towards these young men, thousands of miles from home, out of their depth and completely reliant on one another for survival. They navigate a new world of guilt, sorrow and inhuman violence, with only rueful officers like scoutmasters watching over them.

Sadly the production's \$10 million budget – a tenth the size of Sam Mendes' *1917* and half that of Edward Berger's *All Quiet on the Western Front* – means *Before Dawn* can't match the immense scale and detail of its contemporaries' battlefield set pieces. \$900,000 and tons of timber were used to build earthworks in an unconvincing attempt to transform farmland in Western Australia, into the Western Front. Investment in pyrotechnics, \$1.4 million for the final assault on the Hindenburg Line, yields similarly unimpressive results. A few dozen men charge a pillbox among limited blasts and the close-ups immediately following do little to give the scene scale. The nail-biting redemption for Collins in this finale becomes forgettable.

*Before Dawn* is undeniably an impressive effort for a low-budget independent film, but it fails to make a lasting mark. Speaking about the finale, Prince-Wright told *The West Australian*: "Months and months of planning went into that particular scene, for 15-20 seconds of the movie." And therein lies the misplaced focus of *Before Dawn*. It tries too hard to match the heart-stopping action of recent Great War films, detracting from its successes in developing the 'mateship' between Prince-Wright's profound characters. **LH**

**Below, left:** Depictions of the fraternity of the trenches is where *Before Dawn* excels

**Below, right:** The film explores the horrors of the Western Front through the eyes of young ANZAC soldiers



© Kaleidoscope Entertainment

# HOW TO LOSE A WAR

AN ANALYSIS OF THE US-LED INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN FOLLOWING 9/11 AND THE HASTY WITHDRAWAL THAT BROUGHT THE ENEMY BACK TO POWER

**Author:** Amin Saikal **Publisher:** Yale University Press

**Price:** £18.99 (Hardback) **Released:** June 2024

Less than a month after the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, President George W Bush ordered the first bombings of Afghanistan, prior to the full-scale invasion by US and NATO forces. At the time, a US Senator remarked: "Are we not bombing the wrong country?" His comment reflected the fact that none of the Islamist fanatics involved in the deadly plot were from Afghanistan.

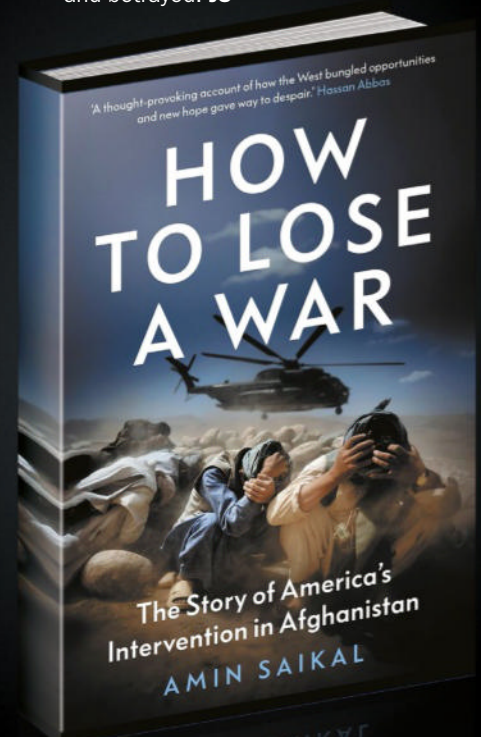
The US-led coalition succeeded in ousting the Taliban but failed to comprehend that Afghanistan, while having been conquered by successive invaders from Alexander the Great onwards, cannot be held for a prolonged length of time. Amin Saikal provides a detailed and authoritative analysis of how, after 20 years of occupation, the West withdrew in disarray.

The author highlights that despite early successes, the US was led into what he defines as the same 'Afghan trap'

that had twice cost the British dearly in the 19th century and the Soviets in the 1980s. The US departed in the belief that a weak peace agreement would prevent the Taliban's reinstatement in Kabul. He elaborates on the fatal weaknesses of early post-Taliban governments and the decay of the National Unity Government. The entire Afghan project was in serious trouble by 2009, under the presidency of Barack Obama, who harboured no doubt that his country was entangled in an unwinnable war. Obama's successor, Joe Biden, turned a deaf ear on senior military commanders who advised against a hasty withdrawal.

Saikal highlights the troubling fact that Biden took no responsibility for the chaotic manner in which American and allied forces rushed to depart the country in August 2021. It was a dark moment in US statesmanship, one that left many Afghans feeling bewildered and betrayed. **JS**

**"THE US WAS LED INTO THE SAME 'AFGHAN TRAP' THAT HAD TWICE COST THE BRITISH DEARLY IN THE 19TH CENTURY AND THE SOVIETS IN THE 1980s"**





# GENERAL HASTINGS 'PUG' ISMAY

THE STORY OF THE UNSUNG BRITISH ARMY GENERAL WHO WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN EVENTS FROM INDIAN AND PAKISTANI INDEPENDENCE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NATO

**Author:** John Kiszely **Publisher:** Hurst Publishers

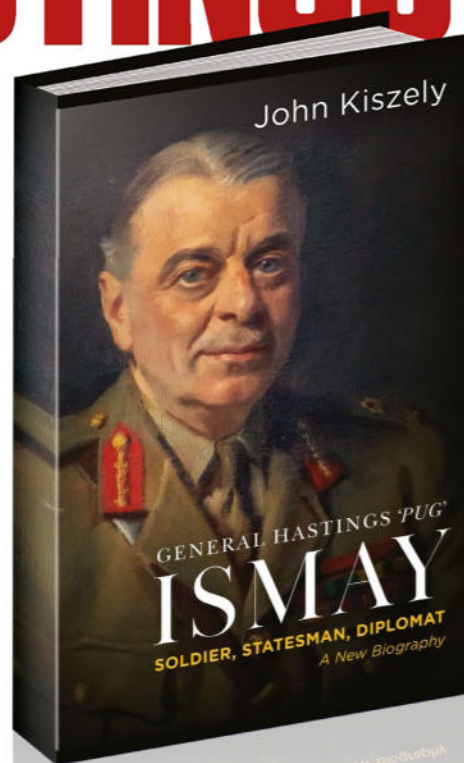
**Price:** £35 (Hardback) **Released:** Out now

During the Second World War, General 'Pug' Ismay came to be known as Winston Churchill's khaki eminence. A lesser known military leader in those years of European conflict than Bernard Montgomery, Harold Alexander or Archibald Wavell, Ismay's key role in events during and after the war are now brought to light in John Kiszely's authoritative biography. Politician, diplomat and general, Ismay was military secretary to Churchill's war cabinet and appointed, albeit reluctantly, the first secretary general of NATO. By the end of his tenure, however, Ismay had become the biggest advocate of the organisation he had once famously said was created to "keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in and the Germans down".

Ismay's career was a remarkable one. "It had been a life of distinguished service to his country and his achievements in four of

his appointments were of historic significance," says Kiszely. Apart from his service with Churchill during the war and afterwards as NATO's Secretary General, Ismay served as deputy secretary of the Committee of Imperial defence and as Lord Mountbatten of Burma's chief of staff in India. The latter two postings reflect Ismay's close links with the British Empire, having been what the author terms a "child of the Raj".

Kiszely's thoroughly documented biography celebrates a soldier's life of distinguished service and achievements of historic significance. From an early age, Ismay showed a determination to succeed at every task laid before him. He was always the "thinking soldier", as the author points out. From commanding the Camel Corps in Somaliland to heading NATO, Ismay was always able to analyse facts or a situation quickly and draw logical, clear conclusions. **JS**



**"FROM AN EARLY AGE, ISMAY SHOWED A DETERMINATION TO SUCCEED AT EVERY TASK LAID BEFORE HIM"**



*Ismay (standing right) with other senior military figures and PM Winston Churchill in the garden of 10 Downing Street*



# THE FIRST COLD WAR

A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF RUSSO-BRITISH RIVALRY AT THE HEIGHT OF THE IMPERIAL AGE, FROM PETER THE GREAT TO THE 1907 TRIPLE ENTENTE

**Author:** Barbara Emerson **Publisher:** Hurst Publishers **Price:** £35 (Hardback) **Released:** Out now

The 'Great Game' was the 19th century rivalry between Britain and Russia for influence in Central Asia, from Turkey to Tibet and Persia to Afghanistan. The two great colonial empires of the day resorted to military interventions in these countries to acquire and redefine territories in each region. This conflict played out as an ongoing battle of intrigue, threats and diplomatic manoeuvring which, however, did not erupt into open warfare between the two contenders. Instead, as Barbara Emerson explains in her skilfully documented book, it was a crucial moment in what she has defined as the First Cold War. By the time this saga came to an end in the early 20th century, a series of independent states and monarchies from the shores of the Caspian Sea to the Eastern Himalayas had become British and Russian protectorates.

Emerson begins her narrative by focusing on 1554 and the opening of trade talks between London and Moscow, and describes how visitors to Russia were struck by "the autocratic power of the tsar, his disregard of any legal restraint, the drunken servility of the aristocracy, the lack of any solid middle class, and the grinding poverty and servitude of those at the bottom". The Russians, on the other hand, saw the English as heretics from a distant land of little immediate interest, who treated them too often with infuriating arrogance and condescension. Trade provided mutual advantage, but there was little else of substance.

Emerson offers the reader the Russian perspective on this 'game', drawing on the archives of the Tsars' Imperial Ministry. Each world power became convinced of the expansionist aims of the other and considered these to be at its own expense. When one was successful, the other upped the ante and on it went. London and St Petersburg entered into open hostilities only once in the 1800s, during the Crimean War. But Russophobia and Anglophobia became ingrained in each camp, as these two great powers hovered on the brink of war for nearly 100 years. Britain and Russia eventually came to recognise they

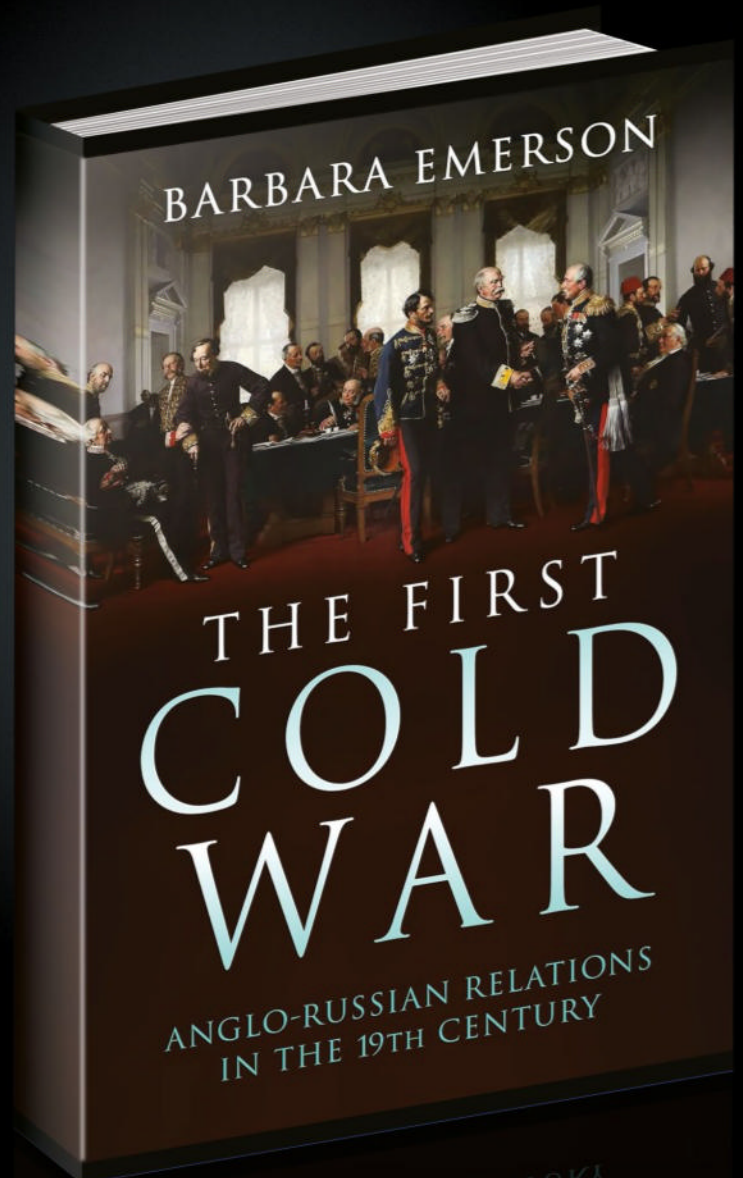
had more to fear from Wilhelmine Germany than from one another. That was when they largely set aside their rivalries, in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, denounced by Britain's political opposition as an alliance with autocratic tsardom. Yet it had major repercussions for the balance of power in Europe, which before that had experienced a century of ruthless competition and tension.

By effectively ending the 'Great Game' in Asia, what the convention accomplished was to shift the balance of power in Europe in favour of the Franco-Russian-British entente that was able to defeat the Alliance central powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey in the First World War. Russo-British political conflict continues to cast a shadow over bilateral relations, even though the British Empire has long since ceased to exist. Both countries are convinced that the other continually interferes in its internal affairs, while Russians still see the hand of the British Secret Service behind their every mishap. Mutual suspicion and hostility have today revived, tempered briefly by another common fight in the Second World War and the hopes generated by Gorbachev. "With Putin," Emerson concludes, "they have resumed at full blast." **JS**

Russia and Britain's rivalry erupted into violence with the Crimean War (1853-56)



Images: Getty





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# SHATTERED SPITFIRE WINDSCREEN

Sub Lieutenant Arthur Blake's broken armoured windscreen shows the dangers of WWII air combat

*Despite the damage, Blake was able to land safely*

**S**pitfire pilots benefited from a host of competitive advantages during the Battle of Britain (1940). Fighting over home territory, they had uniquely strong intelligence via the Dowding System, a pioneering use of radar, and their Spitfires were a match for their main opposition, the Messerschmitt Bf 109. Still, the Spitfire pilots dived with death on every sortie, as shown by Sub Lieutenant Arthur Blake's smashed windscreen.

Blake was among the 50 Fleet Air Arm (FAA) pilots seconded to the RAF's Fighter Command in June 1940 to help replace losses prior to the Battle of Britain. Following training at No 7 Operational Training Unit, he was assigned to the Spitfire-flying No 19 Squadron. This unit was drawn into fighting over London during the battle, each sortie as dangerous as the last. Blake must have thought his time had come when a Bf 109 dropped in behind him and fired a volley. A bullet sliced into his Spitfire, clipping his ear before shattering the inside of the windscreen.

After his close call, Blake continued to fight heroically, including against the large-scale bombing attacks on 15 September, which became known as Battle of Britain Day. Here, he took down a Bf 109, damaged a Dornier Do 17 bomber and helped destroy a Heinkel HE 111 bomber. In the action, Blake's Spitfire was again damaged, but he successfully crash-landed without injury.

On 29 October 1940, he became one of the seven FAA pilots killed in the Battle of Britain. After flying in four successful patrols that day, his fifth was to be his last. Blake was acting as 'weaver' during a patrol over South London, flying above and behind the main formation. Seven Bf 109s were spotted above but the patrol could not engage them and Blake was isolated and vulnerable. It is thought that one or more Bf 109s dived towards Blake and fired at his Spitfire. Bullets entered the cockpit, killing him instantly. His aircraft continued to fly for several miles before crashing into the northeast corner of Oak Lodge on London Road, Chelmsford.

*Spitfire pilots stand by their aircraft. Their life expectancy during the Battle of Britain was just four weeks*



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Blake's shattered Spitfire Mark I windscreen is held in Hanger Two at the Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, located next to RAF Cosford. Entrance is free, although you will need to book an entry time online in advance of your visit. You can also purchase a guide book and parking online for a discounted price. For more information, visit [rafmuseum.org.uk](http://rafmuseum.org.uk)

Images: Getty, RAF Museum



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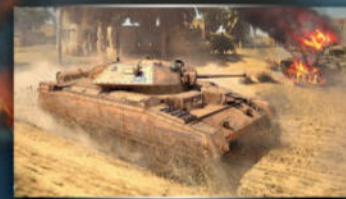


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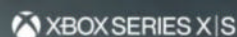
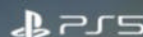
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